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UNDER CROAGH PATRICK

MRS WILLIAM O'BRIEN

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Under Croagh Patrick

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Under Croagh Patrick

By

Mrs. William O'Brien

London
John Long
13 & 14 Norris Street, Haymarket
1904

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THE NEW YORK
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To my Mother

I dedicate these pages.

S. O'B.

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Under Croagh Patrick

CHAPTER I

OLD HEAD

"WHY did you go and settle down at the end of the earth?" was the piteous greeting of an old friend, tired by the long journey from Dublin to Westport, in a slow train, which stopped at every station. It is true that the country one goes through is mostly dull and uninteresting, a country of plains and endless bogs.

"Come and see, and you will forgive us."

Our friend soon recovered her usual good

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temper. Luckily, the tide was high. That is our first thought when we expect strangers; at low tide the shore looks desolate.

Here we are! Croagh Patrick is rising before us in all the beauty of its exquisite shape; the trees that surround our lawn stretch to the foot of the hill. On the right, through the foliage, the sea shimmers and glistens in the glow of the setting sun. Looking out of the big bay window of our small sitting room on this landscape which for the past ten years has grown dearer to us, our old friend tells us she understands why we chose our retreat.

She is mistaken in thinking it was our doing. We had no choice in the matter. As so often happens in the important circumstances of life, it was as it were without any active will on our part that our wandering life ended by our settling down at the foot of Croagh Patrick. It was mostly the effect of the opposition of all surrounding landlords, who were determined not to let any house to such dangerous people as ourselves.

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Under Croagh Patrick

We found shelter at first at Old Head, a few miles further along the Atlantic, thanks to the help of a friend, who took the house in her own name, and managed to inspire confidence in the lady of the house, a good old Tory, who never guessed that her pretty cottage was to be tenanted by such desperate characters.

My husband was coming out of Galway jail, and he required perfect rest to get back his strength for the cruel struggle which the split had brought on Ireland. Whilst in prison he had begun to write a novel, the plot of which was laid in Clare Island, and under the shelter of St. Patrick's Holy Hill, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and of Graun'ya Uaile, the Queen of Clare Island, three hundred years ago, and he wished to refresh his memory by living in the midst of the scenes of the story before finishing his novel.

Oh, the delicious retreat, hidden among the trees on the cliffs! At our feet, the sea, the open sea, and Clare Island rising above the billows, and on all sides rocks and lovely big

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waves, which reminded me of Biarritz. We had the lovely sandy beach all to ourselves, no bather had discovered it, and as we were eight miles away from a station or a telegraph office, the country was unknown to tourists.

It was my first attempt at housekeeping. The helpful friend who had lent us her name, had also lent us an old servant (an Irishwoman who had been in Canada, and could tell me of the stirring scenes she witnessed when "the Master" went to Canada; she was in the crowd on some of the critical days)—and a perfect servant, if only she were allowed to do all the work alone. I was afraid at first that she would be lonely, and when we arrived, I settled with a neighbour, a pleasant young woman, to come and help our servant and spend the day in the kitchen; but the stranger drew on her head the wrath of Winnie, who complained bitterly to me that the woman could do nothing but drink tea, and that as soon as her back was turned, the teapot was taken down from the shelf and filled again. I had to send the neighbour

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home, and Winnie displayed her qualities. We were two miles away from the nearest village, and we had to send for our bread and meat. As to other provisions, the convenient parcel post brought all to our door, and it is a convenient plan—with the slight drawback that owing to unaccountable delays, our Friday fish sometimes arrived on Saturday, for although we were near the sea, we had ignominiously to order our fish from Dublin.

I bought a few hens which Winnie took great pleasure in fattening. She loved animals and she treated them with more consideration than she did the unfortunate Mayo people. She was born in County Sligo, which touches County Mayo, and she believed herself superior to mere Mayo folks. What surprised me was that the Mayo men whom she abused so harshly had not a word to say for themselves. Mayo, as the reader knows, is one of the poorest counties of Ireland, and Mayo men were quite accustomed to be treated as inferior beings. When in England or America, Mayo men used to be asked where they came

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from, the answer was, "From Mayo, God help us!"

It is from this poor Mayo that, within our life-time, have sprung two national movements, which have brought new life to Ireland: the Land League, and, within the past few years, the United Irish League, which united Ireland after years of cruel internal warfare. So perhaps to-day Mayo men are prouder of their Mayo, and they might have something to retort now to Winnie's attacks. But in those days she had it all her own way.

Winnie was clever, she spoke well, she did her work marvellously well, without fuss or noise, but she was somewhat peculiar. She loved to entertain me with the description of the last illness and death of her former mistress. She related this with many a detail and many a tear, and it was not altogether cheerful to listen to this tale. But each time I remained in the kitchen, once the work for the day was settled, I had to submit to what was coming. She lowered her voice and pointed out to the kitchen window against

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which a green branch pressed close. "What would you say if the face of my last mistress appeared among the leaves?" And she began to study this wretched branch in a fit of abstraction. Many a time I wished I could get it cut off. However, the proprietor might not have approved of this, so there was nothing left for me but to fly, or to ask how the cat was getting on. This question always brought a smile on Winnie's face. When we had arrived we found a cat, so thin that it would frighten anyone, a shy cat, a cat accustomed to blows, who had never known any petting; a cat who managed to live out of doors, and had never been fed in the kitchen. The first time Winnie prepared some bread and milk, the poor thing ran away in terror. Winnie set herself to tame the cat. She took infinite pains, and with time and patience she taught him to eat out of a plate. One day she came to me with a triumphant air.

"Did you find your supper of salmon to your taste?" I enquired. (I had told her to eat what remained from our dinner).

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"I have better news for you than that. The cat took it!"

"The horrid creature," I exclaimed, "I will teach that cat not to be a thief!"

"But I am so pleased," protested Winnie. "I had so much trouble to teach the cat to eat fish, and he jumped so daintily on the plate, and ate everything."

She was so proud of the feat of the cat that I had no chance of teaching him to behave better. I must say that owing to the care of Winnie, our lean cat soon became a very fine, big cat. I can imagine how the poor animal missed us after we went away, and how hard it must have been to accustom himself to his former starving condition.

Young Paddie had won nearly as warm a corner in Winnie's heart as the cat. Paddie was a nice, rosy-cheeked boy of ten. His father was the gardener of the owner of the place and he offered his services, but Winnie refused with much dignity. However, she accepted Paddie's help. He used to go to Louisburgh for us and bring us back bread

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and stamps—the latter in great request by us. I could not get Winnie to eat her meals at regular hours; she had a curious way of eating. When she fed her hens she took her share of their food, and she was only too pleased when the cat ate her supper.

It is characteristic of the Irish race to look on food as a very second-rate matter. A man is away for the day, on his return you ask him if he has lunched or dined, and he will require a moment's thought before he remembers that really he has eaten nothing for the day, and is feeling hungry. If you did not question him, he might forget all about it. When country people go to fairs or markets, they leave the house at dawn, and too often they don't trouble about breakfast, nor do they take any provision for the road. They remain standing all day without eating until the business is over, and then if they stop to take anything the easiest and handiest that offers is often a glass of whiskey. You can guess the effect of whiskey—often bad whiskey—on an empty stomach. When I hear people

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denounce the drunkenness of Irishmen, I think within myself that their vice is not so much that they drink too much, but that they do not think enough about food. It will take time and patience to teach Irish people the necessity of eating regularly, as Winnie taught the cat to eat fish.

Winnie was too old, and we were together for too short a time to try to alter her habits, some of which were very peculiar. On one occasion she gave me a start. The house where we were staying had a number of small bedrooms, and when we took possession I let Winnie choose her room. One evening I had forgotten to give her a message for the morning, and I called her after she had gone to bed. I knocked at the door of her bedroom,—no answer! I opened the door,—no sign of Winnie. She was sleeping in another room, and then I found out that each night she settled down in a different bed.

Clare Island stretched out in front of us. Some days, according to the lights and shades, the Island appeared so near that it seemed

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as if by extending our arms, we could almost touch it, and the wish came into our minds to pay the island a visit. A fisherman from Murrisk offered to take us across, and he came for us one lovely morning. When we started the wind was favourable, and he promised to take us to Clare Island in two hours.

Burke, the fisherman was thin, with hollow face and intelligent eyes. His son, a lad of twelve, barefooted and silent, was working among the ropes. The wind died away suddenly, and a dead calm kept us for hours close to Clare Island. Our boatman had been in America, where he had worked in a mine, and he explained to us that he returned because he had met with an accident, and broke one of his fingers. He came home and took to fishing again; it was a hard life, but as long as he had his boat, he could make both ends meet. One day, however, his boat was lost and his father was drowned, then he knew what despair meant. He told us about it. He had gone fishing with his father, the weather was fine at first, but a squall—one of

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the dangers of Clew Bay—arose suddenly. The billows swept around the boat and the fishermen were in danger. Burke knew that his father could not swim (unfortunately the case with many fishermen). The boat went down, and Burke caught his father in his arms and tried to swim ashore with his burden through the angry sea. But the weight was too great. His arms grew stiff, and his father sank. Then Burke dived down and caught hold of him again. Three times he succeeded in seizing the old man, but the fourth time he was not able to keep a grip of him. Once more the father went down, and when the son dived after him he could find nothing; he tried many and many a time, but at last, worn out and despairing he struck out for the shore alone. Alas! he had not been able to save his father! At this recollection, he now hangs down his head and his features express his remorse and misery. It seems to him that we will despise him for this confession of failure, and he never dreams that we admire the pluck with which he tried to

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save his father, and the manly simplicity with which he tells us of his failure. After three days the old man's corpse was found, and he sleeps now with his fathers within the walls of Murrisk Abbey.

"And the boat?"

"I was able to save the boat. Before it sank, I climbed the mast and took my bearings, and I was able later on to bring some of the comrades to the spot where it had disappeared, and we managed to set it afloat. It is in this very boat you are now. But we are getting close to the island at last."

I had no time to let him know that it would be better not to tell strangers his tragic story, when he took them to sea. He would not have understood my anxiety at finding myself in a boat with such a past.

Father Molloy was on the beach, and he took us around the island. In those days Clare Island was in a ferment. The island belonged to two ladies. Their father had bought the island and paid a big price for it, and he doubled and trebled the rents. The unfortu-

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nate tenants were unable to pay, and the struggle was hopeless. The sheriff used to come to seize the cattle, and to do this he had bought a yacht, which carried him and his emergency men to the island. As soon as the islanders saw the hated craft they sent round the signal; all cows and sheep then disappeared in the fastnesses of the island.

After a useless search the baffled sherriff would have to leave, but only to return on another occasion. Father Molloy gave us some idea of the woes of his parishioners, as he escorted us to see the castle of Graun'ya Uaile the famous queen of Clare Island. Miss Molloy took me to the Presbytery to rest, whilst Father Molloy accompanied my husband to other ruins at some distance. Miss Molly described her life on the island alone with her brother, and told me that at certain times of the year the storms stopped all communication between the island and the mainland, and that they remained two, three, or perhaps more weeks completely cut off; no boat could leave the island or approach it.

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At such times provisions grow scanty, and every one helps his neighbours. If the storm lasts too long the islanders suffer from want. But how happy they feel when the sea gets calm and the first boat arrives! Once a month her brother sails across to Inishturk, another island, also under his care. The distance is not great, and when the weather is fine it is a pleasant trip, but in bad weather the priest may be detained a prisoner, 'and then I do feel a little lonely,' says the young girl. But she loves Clare island all the same; she loves the people of the island; she tells me how poor they are, and how persecuted they are, and how wonderfully patient they are.

Miss Molloy gives us a dinner, which proves we have not come at a time of starvation. The hours pass so pleasantly that we are quite surprised to find how late it is, and that we had better hurry home.

The sky has become overcast. We go down to the beach with Father Molloy and his sister; they wish to take us back in their

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own boat, but we cannot put this slight on poor Burke, and we start off in his boat. Scarcely have we left the island, when Burke's sail gets torn in two. At the sight of this the face of the young lad expresses untold despair. Father Molloy comes to our rescue, and carries us off in his boat. We leave Burke on Clare Island, as he tells us he will repair the damage in a short time.

We land at Roona, the nearest point on the coast; the rain is spilling, and we are a few miles from Old Head. We stop in a cottage, and are invited to settle down at the turf fire by a woman who welcomes us with the dignity of a duchess. The innate politeness of the country people makes life among them very pleasant. Her husband goes out to find us a car, saying he knows a neighbour who has one, and in a short time we start off. It is night, and the rain still falls heavily. I am impatient to arrive at Old Head, and my husband asks our driver to go as fast as he can. His answer remains in my memory—"For the lucre of a few minutes, would you

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run the risk of an accident?" And we agree to let him go at his own pace.

Most peasants of the Western coast, in speaking English use Gaelic idioms, which give an original flavour to their talk. All along the coast, and away in the mountains, in the poorest parts of the country a good many people still talk Irish; most know English as well, and the young people prefer to speak English. Gaelic seems to them a sign of inferiority. But whether they like it or not, they think in Gaelic, even while they speak in English. Each family recites the rosary every evening, and they tell us the old people give out the prayers in Irish, and the young people answer in English. Nothing can be more musical or more touching than a prayer in Irish. Even when one does not know the language one is struck by its harmony. They say Irish is the best language for praying—or cursing in.

Whilst the people who are able to speak Irish have the weakness to be ashamed of it, a revival of the Irish language is going on in

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other parts of the country, and is growing rapidly every day. In the towns (where Irish, as a spoken language, had quite died out) many are the classes attended by young men and young women, eager to learn the beautiful tongue of their fathers.

On our arrival we found Winnie a prey to despair. She learned the story of Burke's boat when we left the house, and she ran along the cliffs making desperate signs to call us back. We did not notice her, however, and she returned to weep over our fate. We had told her to expect us at dinner-time, and every hour that passed without tidings of us added to her conviction that we were drowned. Her joy was therefore great on seeing us alive, though wet, and in a very short time she had a hot drink ready, and a bright fire ablaze to warm us up.

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CHAPTER II

ALTAMOUNT VILLA

THE following year I wrote to the owner of the pretty cottage at Old Head, to offer to take it for summer and autumn. She wrote me back very drily that the house was not to let (I heard on the other hand, that it was on the books of a Dublin house agent, but the lady did not wish to have Nationalists under her roof).

We set out looking for another house, and then I understood how well Tories manage to organise boycotting. Twenty miles around, from Old Head to Mulranny, the answer was the same; any house that would have been let to any one else without difficulty, was not to let when we wished to take it. Every rich

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man belonged to the opposite camp, and would have thought he was bringing on himself his neighbours' contempt if he took us as tenants, and friends were mostly badly off and had nothing to offer us. And yet our wishes were very modest—a small house, a few trees, the sea!

I am not going to tell all our disappointments. Our visit to Heather Lodge will show the kind of thing that went on.

We were told of a pretty house near Mulranny, and we drove to Heather Lodge. When we arrived, the caretaker, a red-haired Scotchman, was most polite. He showed us the little house, which just suited us, amidst the heather and close to the sea. He explained to us the conditions, which were to our liking, I even discussed with him as to some small changes in the furniture which seemed to me necessary, and I imagined that our troubles were over. We went for a walk. On our return I did not recognise my Scotchman, he was so gruff and so glum, and only answered in monosyllables.

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"We won't have that house," was my husband's comment as we started back.

Patsy, the old coachman who drove us from Westport, had told the Scotchman who we were, and the latter's dismay made us guess what his master's feelings would be. In a few days we received a letter telling us that Heather Lodge was not to let.

Opposition of this kind only aroused the spirit of contradiction which slumbers in us all, and we decided that if the Tories around would not allow us to remain six months at the foot of Croagh Patrick, we would settle there for life.

In our searches for a house, a young Westport priest, whom we knew when we were staying at Old Head, led us to one at Rosbeg; a house with fields and a garden, but it was not to let—only for sale, and it was empty. It could not possibly suit us! Once on the spot, we went through it. The large window of the drawing-room looked out on a pretty lawn, surrounded by trees, and Croagh Patrick rose in front of us. It was hard to take one's

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eyes away from such a lovely view; we were in the month of May, the grass had that emerald tint which is one of the delights of the Irish meadows; the laburnums were glistening with their golden flowers, and their bright garlands surrounded the lawn; the trees were so thick that they prevented our seeing the road, and one might have believed oneself far away from any other habitations. The hawthorn and lilacs filled the air with their lovely perfume.

The woman who showed us over had too tender a conscience. She made us notice the least defects; the bed-rooms were small and dark (we found later on that the trees had grown too luxuriant around the house) downstairs, on the ground-floor where the kitchen and servants' rooms were, she pointed out with her finger damp spots. "There are rats," she added, in a hollow voice.

I ran away into the garden, an old-fashioned garden with green arches and bowers of climbing plants, an old sun-dial, a rockery in the middle and a stream running through the

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garden; the straight walks were bordered with box, and crossed and re-crossed one another; primroses and violets were flowering, the apple trees were a glory of exquisite blossoms, and there was a great mass of foliage in all the exquisite tints of early spring. Not a branch had been cut for years, all had been allowed to grow wild, giving the garden an air of mystery. One would have loved to have remained listening to the brook, whilst the lovely verses in which Shelley described another wild garden were singing in one's memory.

Unfortunately, one cannot live in a garden, and it would have been mad to think of furnishing a house for six months, (even if we could have secured the house for that time, which was doubtful).

We gave up looking ourselves, and asked a house agent in Dublin to inquire in another direction. We had been told of a house near Leenane, in a lovely situation close to a lake and among woods, which had belonged to one of the strangers who came to the West in

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the time of the Great Famine, and who had taken an immense tract of land (from which the tenants had been evicted) replacing the hunted human beings by black-faced sheep, which were to make his fortune. He ended miserably: his son went to America, and the house remained empty. Somehow, we never managed to discover that house lost among the mists.

One day the thought struck us that the best thing to do was to buy the house with the deserted garden. Instead of wondering each year where to go, we should have a home, and, after years spent in London lodgings, the thought of a house of our own, and in the country, was very tempting.

We asked a Dublin agent to carry on the negotiations, but warned him to keep our name secret until all was settled. The agent inspired confidence. Luckily for us, he was a Conservative, but not fanatical, and he did not think it his duty to do his clients an ill turn because they were Nationalists. He informed us that, to have the house and garden, we

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must buy the fields also; there were about twenty acres. I don't know why the prospect of having so much land did not appear at all attractive to us, but the owner (who had lately inherited the place) wished to sell everything at once. The price was very moderate; there was also, it is true, an annual rent to pay to Lord Sligo, but all the same the conditions of the sale were satisfactory, so we made up our minds to buy the house and fields.

The agent acted with great caution, and only revealed the name of the dangerous buyers, when all the legal formalities had been carried out, and it was impossible for the seller to draw back. The seller, a Doctor from Newport, was quite satisfied to have concluded the bargain, and did not trouble his head as to our opinions, but all the Tories of the neighbourhood soon explained to him his mistake, and told him he must break off the arrangement. How could one allow such a brand of discord to set the country on fire? Perhaps the Doctor might have had to give in, but it was out of his power. And that is the

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way we became owners of Altamount Villa, of the garden and the fields, and the tenants of Lord Sligo. We changed Altamount Villa into Mallow Cottage.

Luke, the gardener, the husband of the woman with the tender conscience, was recommended to us as a trustworthy man. We left him and his wife in charge of the house and place until we were able to settle down.

Our coming was delayed; the gardener wrote to me that it was time to cut the hay, and that he was surprised his new master had not arrived to see about it. His master was in the turmoil of a general election, and would have had to think for a while before he recollected he had hay to cut. So I answered Luke, telling him to manage as best he could, and I wondered to myself what we would do with our hay. I assure you since that time I have learnt what hay is good for, and am well pleased when we have a good lot in the rick yard.

In September, politics allowed a respite, and we could think of settling down. Workmen

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from Dublin came to make the necessary arrangements, and I have kept a very pleasant recollection of those men, who reminded me of the Parisian workmen I loved to watch at work. The Dublin men had the same anxiety to do their work as well as possible, and they had an artistic feeling as to the effect they were aiming at. The upholsterer who draped our curtains, had draped those very curtains twenty years before in a house which we had bought in Dublin—a house with several flights of stairs and large rooms, a house that weighed on my spirits, and where we never lived. He managed to make the curtains fit our lower rooms, and drew my attention to the exquisite material, and explained to me what I was to do in order not to spoil the beauty of the folds.

At that time the Villa belonging to the owner of the Railway Hotel was empty, and the lady gladly lent us the use of it. This made settling down very easy, as we could go backward and forward every day, whilst the workmen were at work.

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I made use of a few days, during which my husband had to go away to attend some meetings, to move to our new home.

We had a cook, younger and more sane than Winnie, yet no less able and quite as devoted. And now that I am on the burning subject of servants, may I take time to make a note of what I have found by my own experience and learned from friends and acquaintances since I came to live in Ireland? Irish servants of the *right kind* are the best one can wish to meet with in any country, and they make the life of a mistress very easy. They are good workers, honest and faithful, and take an interest in their master's concerns —perhaps occasionally taking more interest than he does himself. There is between servant and mistress a bond of affection and equality which would be almost impossible in another country. A mistress can count on her servant; she can trust her with a most important secret—a secret which the political enemy at the gate would pay dearly for—and yet the mistress can sleep with an easy

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mind. English political men are sometimes obliged to use strange places for secret interviews, they dare not hold them in their own houses for fear the servants would sell the secret to the papers. I have sometimes wondered if it was this terror which explained the curious interview of Lord Carnarvon and Parnell in a deserted house. Would Lord Carnarvon have been afraid to trust his household with the secret of this meeting? An Irish servant would allow herself to be cut to pieces, rather than sell a secret of her master's even if she were to gain a fortune by her indiscretion.

The only thing a mistress has to fear in her servant is the love of drink, and that is only the case in regard to some elderly cooks. She need not have that anxiety with young maids. As a rule, all girls at confirmation take the pledge till they are twenty-one, or perhaps for life, and if one has not tasted strong drink before twenty, one is not likely to feel the need of it then. This custom which all Irish bishops are trying to enforce with

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young boys, as well as girls, is one of the surest means of putting a stop to the habit of drunkenness.

But if you happen to have an elderly servant, who is sober and fond of her masters, you can count on domestic peace. It is like a glimpse of the golden age. You have no fear that she will leave you to go to America, or to get married. As I am writing, there rises before my mind the good honest face of an old servant who makes some friends of mine very comfortable. She loves her masters so much that her only regret is that she is not allowed to serve them for no wages at all. One time she fancied they were in some money difficulty, and she offered them her savings (which was quite a little fortune), and was deeply grieved when her offer was refused.

If she loves the master and the mistress, her love for the children is greater still; and the children love her, and look on Mary as one of the family. It required all Mary's affection for her masters to induce her to follow them to

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England. She had never left Ireland, and the thought of London filled her with misgiving, for she expected to find an enemy in every shopkeeper. Her struggles with the tradespeople of her new surroundings were somewhat terrific.

Her mistress had to go to America to see some relations, and she took the children with her. Mary remained to look after the master. You may be sure he was well taken care of. Mary had one regret on this occasion. She did not understand why the master would not look at her accounts, but always paid her at once. It seemed to her things would have been more in order if he had gone over her bill-statements. If he had found out a mistake, or been able to point out some economy, she would have been quite happy. But the poor man had something else on his mind and did not satisfy Mary on that point. She had another slight grievance. She found he was extravagant in the matter of shirts and collars. She gave him several lectures, but he took no notice, and at last, in

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her despair over the laundry bill, she set to work herself to wash and iron, with the result that her absent-minded master confided to her one day that London laundresses had lost their cunning. Mary did not say a word.

Her correspondence with her dear children was very constant, and her pride over the letters most delightful. On their return, her joy expressed itself by such a display of cakes and sweet things, that the recollection had not yet faded from the mind of the young people, and they gave me a grand description of it last time we met.

On the day of the move, the gardener came to see me early in the morning, looking very morose. He was a strange little man, wiry and active; he appeared as if he were dreading to be dismissed on the spot. I tried to reassure him as best I could and to make him feel that we had none but friendly feelings towards him; this was a mistake; he was one of those men who do well as long as they are afraid of their master.

There was a dog in Mallow Cottage, who

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evoked in me a certain dread. He was chained all day and only allowed out in the evening. The gardener told me he let the dog free at night to watch the garden. The poor animal was thin to such an extent as to remind one of Dostoievski's description of a starving dog, and altogether he did not inspire confidence. I asked one day if he got anything to eat. Luke's wife answered in a peevish tone that she looked after his food, and her husband added that he ate the apples that he found on the ground. I own that the idea of facing him caused me a certain anxiety, and I made up my mind to gain his friendship by giving him something more substantial than an apple.

The man, however, came to tell me the dog was ill and strange; he did not know what to make of him.

"Is the dog going mad," was my question.

"I don't know. I cannot answer for anything."

"I won't keep the dog at Mallow Cottage," I said; "take him with you to your new cottage, if you like," (we had taken a cottage

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for the gardener and his wife) "or put an end to him."

"I won't undertake to have charge of the dog," said Luke.

"Well, then, put an end to him."

The gloomy face became blacker, "Very well, I will have him killed to-morrow early. I will keep him chained all night."

Terror makes us cruel. I had not a moment's hesitation in condemning the poor beast to death without better proof of danger.

Moving is an absorbing occupation, and I was so taken up with unpacking and settling all sorts of things, that I forgot all about the death sentence.

Next morning, I was barely awake and began lazily to make up plans for the day, when I heard a shot, then another—I shivered and hid my face under the blankets. The dog the poor dog! I felt I had been too rash! If he was not mad! Better food, kinder treatment, might have had a beneficial effect on his temper. I felt horrified at my cowardice, and to this day, at times, when my gentle dog,

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Nell, looks at me with her lovely brown eyes so full of intelligent affection, I wonder what she would think of me if she knew how badly I behaved towards the poor, thin dog who used to feed on green apples!

Our idea of living in the country seemed very strange to others. My husband's friends predicted that, after a month in the wilderness, he would fly to a town. Twelve years have passed since then, and our only regret is to leave our nest among the trees, and to find ourselves again in that wilderness of houses and streets which makes up London.

The want of society—but we are bears, and don't feel the want of what is called society! The only society we enjoy is that of our poor neighbours. We meet them on the road, or they come to see us, and the more we know them, the more we appreciate their fine qualities, the more we admire their patience and their courage.

Our other neighbours, the Tories, keep aloof and leave us alone, and that is all we wish. I have said how great was their indignation

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when they saw the brand of discord settled in their midst. Their anger took a funny shape.

We have a well in our lawn, the water of which is deliciously pure and abundant. The late owner kept the well locked up and only lent the key to one or two favoured families. Once we settled down, we did away with the locking of the well, and let anyone who wished come to it for water. In the neighbourhood pure drinking water is rare, and our aristocratic neighbours have no wells on their land, and have to send for water to a distance. They made up their minds they would not use our well—which did not wound our feelings, as you may guess. It seems, however, as time went on that the convenience of having water at hand conquered their dislike of a Nationalist's well, and I was told that they sent for water early in the morning or late in the evening, when no one was looking.

It was not only the well that was kept under lock and key by the old lady who lived here before our time, she loved to lock up everything. The garden was doubly locked, she

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had a key tied to her belt, the gardener had another, no one else dare enter the garden, winter or summer. She was a litttle lady, very active and lively, I was told. When her father died, he left the place to his daughter; his second wife remained with her step-daughter till her death, and then the little lady was left alone. Her father had been the agent of a few landlords around, and had had a study at one end of the house—a tiny little room, with an entrance from outside by a winding stair, on which only one man could go up at a time. How many tragedies took place in that little room! With what weight in their hearts the poor creatures went up the winding stairs, and how coldly the agent listened to the tale of their woes! In those days, tenants were at the mercy of landlords and agents in as hopeless a way as if they had been serfs or slaves. Even in our time, in spite of the enormous progress realised within the past thirty years, one has to live in a poor country like Mayo, one has to listen to the poor people's stories, to realise how heavy the

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tyranny of landlords can be. And they are not idle tales; the poor tenants bring the proof of what they say. They come to ask my husband's advice, and they spread out before him their papers, rent-receipts, eviction notices, law papers, all kinds of documents which they only dimly understand. Having studied these papers, it turns out often that the unfortunate tenant is the victim of some monstrous injustice at the hands of the landlord, agent or lawyer. That he has paid more than he owed, and not received the legal receipt, that by a cunning twist of the law he has lost the advantage of some clause of a Land Act passed in favour of tenants such as he, and he is so accustomed to be ill-treated that he feels less keenly the injustice, than the man whose advice he has come to learn. It does the poor man good to tell his story; he does not expect that any material advantage will follow the talk, but it relieves him to meet with sympathy, and instead of finishing his tale by cursing the people who have ill-treated him, "God is good," he says reverently.

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How often have I heard that exclamation, and how often have I felt ashamed in presence of so much patience and piety!

In the hard life of these poor people, religion has been the only consolation. True piety has helped them to bear their sad fate. How many a resigned word have I heard spoken by poor women, whose grief made me feel tongue-tied, as if any attempt of mine at consolation would only sound a cruel mockery.

"God is good," they say.

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CHAPTER III

GARDENING AND FARMING

THE late owner had not done any tillage; she grew a few vegetables in her garden, and she kept sheep in her fields. The gardener had looked after everything single-handed. Some of her fields may have been let out.

She had never married. She had a passionate love for animals, mostly dogs and cats, her house was full of them. As soon as the front door was approached a great concert of barking and mewing was heard. She fed the animals too well and would never allow them out. When her step-mother lived, the dogs used to be taken out for a stroll on the lawn but once she died, they never left the house. The drawing-room was all decorated with ivy which had grown through the wall, and was

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trained around the pictures and the window, in the quaintest fashion.

After her stepmother's death, the lady lived alone with her servant, and she was nervous at night. She slept every night in a different room and had barricaded the front door with as many bolts and bars as if she expected to stand a siege.

When she felt she was dying, she had two twin kids, born during her illness, brought to her bedside, and she kept them in her room until she lost consciousness.

All young animals are very attractive. A young donkey foal, or a young horse foal gambolling near their mother, is a delightful sight. A young calf is somewhat stiff and awkward, and yet I have made friends with a young, brown calf who follows my husband about, and shows his affection by odd head caresses, which cause a certain amount of jealously and astonishment in Nell's soul, as she watches these curious proceedings, with a sad expression in her brown eyes. A lamb always appeals to one's heart, but of all live

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yield to the surrounding influences and become as colourless as the rest.

The house was haunted! We did not know it. I learned it one day when I proposed that a girl of the neighbourhood, whom I took by the day to help our servant, should sleep at Mallow Cottage on wet nights, instead of walking back to her mother's cottage in the rain.

"Maggie is afraid of the ghost," said Mary Ann, smiling.

I guessed afterwards that the fear of the ghost was a pretext to attend the dances in the neighbourhood, and the repetition of these festivities made Maggie so sleepy at her work that I had to part from her.

Besides the house, there was another place where I was told the dead lady appeared. It was the garden. In a corner there was a little space shut in by iron rails and closed by an iron door that could be locked. It was the tomb of a beloved dog, and the old lady cultivated this enclosure herself. She was in the habit of shutting herself up for hours within the iron rails, so the gardener told me. When

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one looked for her in vain everywhere else, one knew she was there, and she alone did all the gardening within this little space. I must say we did away with the iron rail and, as I write, early potatoes are looking very green on the grave of the dog.

The joy of the gardener was great when his new master told him he could put some order in the garden, by cutting off a few branches. My husband explained what he wished done before we left.

On our return we were shocked. The garden was bare. All its beauty, all its quaintness gone. The green arches and the lovely bowers had disappeared, the ivy was cut down, and one could have believed that some savages had destroyed everything. Our Luke was proud of his handiwork, and took very ill his master's remarks. The terror of the first days had been replaced by an overbearing tone, which went on growing till the day when our patience was exhausted. He proved to his own satisfaction that he had carried out his master's orders, and that his master was

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making a mistake by not being pleased, and very unwillingly he set to work to repair the evil done, and give back to the garden its old charm. It was slow work; years passed before the evil was repaired.

For a long while the fields were a burden to us; we had been obliged to buy them in order to have the house and garden, but what were we to do with the fields? We would willingly have given them away if we had known to whom to give them; the curious notion came into our minds to allow our poor neighbours to bring their cattle into them, but this chimerical plan would have had drawbacks. Some people offered to hire the fields from us, but they were people who were well off and had plenty of land; we refused.

In the end, as we had the fields, we had to make use of them, and, very much against the grain, we started our farming.

The fields had not been tilled for many a year. We put potatoes down first, our harvest was wonderful. I found that our potatoes had a flavour that I had not enjoyed

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before. Even apart from the pride of the farmer in one's first crop, I must say that to know what potatoes can taste like, you must eat them in Ireland, in their jackets, and you will find potatoes of other lands, however well seasoned and made up, tasteless and poor.

What struck my ignorance as a townswoman was the crop of stones that was taken out of our first field; there were enough stones to build a high wall, and each new field that was tilled produced a like supply. The first year so many stones are taken out of the ground that it is hard to know what to do with them —the second year and the third year, there is the same crop of stones. Do I say stones? It is rocks I should say! Often gunpowder has to be used to shake these monsters. Sometimes when we have not a man skilled in blasting within call, we use a primitive means of breaking up the rocks; first putting a quantity of turf on the rock and setting fire to it, then pouring cold water on the red hot stone; this makes it more easily broken up. If we find so many stones in our fields, which

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are of better quality than most of the land around, one can guess what are the struggles of poor men who have to draw from this stony soil their meagre food.

We began buying cattle to fatten and sell afterwards. I was afraid of having a milch cow, and for a long time would not have one; my ignorance imagined all sorts of difficulties, but the first milch cow made me change my mind. We have now four cows, and make our own butter, and I cannot now understand how one could ever wish to live in the country without cows and without fields. We rear our own calves and sell them, and I can tell you that I am a proud woman on the day I have sold my calves at a fair price.

It is true that a farmer, who meant to live on the profits of his farming, would find some of our proceedings odd; no farmer would guess the use of our paths, which lead one through our whole domain with dry feet when the grass is wet. My husband thought of it one bad year when he had to invent work to save some of the poor people around from starving, and

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now we greatly enjoy our paths, as well as the seats we have placed where the view is most lovely in several of our fields.

We made different experiments in our farming. For instance, at a time when country people did not believe in the good effects of spraying potatoes (to sprinkle liberally on the potatoes a mixture very like the one that saved the French vines), we had half of our field sprayed and the other half let alone. We tried the experiment for several years, with such remarkable results, that even Luke, who began by being sceptical, ended by being a believer of spraying and advising the people around to try it. It was a new idea, and was met with misgiving.

"God sends us the disease of the potatoes, and it is going against His will to use this means, which our fathers never heard of," was the remark made by one disbeliever to our gardener. He however retorted (as he himself told me proudly) "God sends us illness, and we don't believe we are doing wrong when we send for a doctor to cure us."

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But this argument had not much effect. We offered to give the mixture to any farmer who wished to try it, and to lend him the machine necessary for spraying. Only one man offered the first year to make the attempt, and I don't think it was that he believed in the remedy, only he wished to please me.

One of the fears about the spraying was that the mixture was a poison, and that the potatoes would become poisonous. A cow eating the leaves of the potatoes freshly sprinkled with the mixture would be poisoned, then how could one help being anxious lest the potatoes themselves would be contaminated?

A bad harvest conquered these fears, the next year everyone was most eager to get the mixture, and the machines which we had offered to lend and nobody would use, were borrowed with joy. It became a mania, and since that year of distress, everyone around uses the mixture, but they have come to believe—rightly or wrongly, I don't know—that brooms of heather dipped in the liquid

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are more efficacious than the machines, which easily get out of order. It was indeed in that primitive way I saw our field sprayed last summer, and as I expressed my surprise, it was proved to me that brooms were more convenient. For the present the machines are discarded.

March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, is the date the peasants await to begin their field work. We wished to begin earlier, but it was not easy to get Luke to try any new thing. He made me understand that a religious bond united St. Patrick's Day and the beginning of field work, and he hinted that one ran the risk of angering the Saint by being too impatient. However, as this did not impress the Master, he consented one year to put down some early potatoes in January, and we had new potatoes towards May 10th, which was unheard of around us.

I was so proud of my early potatoes, that I wanted to see how much could be made by selling them. I sent a cart load to Westport on a market day, but the price offered was so

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small, that our man was indignant and brought us back the cart full. Then I sent my potatoes to Dublin, and I must own that when the carriage was paid, the profit did not encourage me to try again.

We wanted to convert our neighbours to the advantage of sowing early, and we have had a sad experience in the matter ourselves. Often potatoes sown early rot in the ground; we have had now and again to replace early seeds that have failed. On the whole, it does seem that the chances of a good harvest are better when one does not sow too early.

We have made several attempts to find out what could be grown and sold with profit. Vegetables grow wonderfully well, peas and beans and asparagus are amongst the most successful, but we are too far from a market to be able to sell with profit. The expenses of railway carriage are very high in Ireland. It is one of the great difficulties with which we farmers, away from large towns, have to contend.

What succeeded best with me for sale were

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narcissus. We bought ten thousand bulbs at ten shillings the thousand, and put them down in a little garden which had been left wild for many a day. My husband set to digging and getting rid of the weeds. Once the first expense of getting the ground ready and putting down the bulbs is over, there is no further outlay. The first year I had no flowers to sell, the second year I made two pounds, last year my profit rose to eight pounds. I send the flowers to two merchants in Dublin. Narcissus stand travelling well, and I could send them quite as fresh to London. When the flowers are cut, the grass grows and we can take the hay off the garden without doing any harm to the bulbs. The narcissus are the lovely double ones; daffodils would pay as well, and give as little trouble, they grow very easily with us and flower early, before they are blooming in England out of doors. We tried violets; our violets flower from October to March, and are fine blooms with long stems; I found the sale fairly profitable. The trouble with them is

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that they have to be moved to a different place every two years, and this means care and expense as to manure, so that violet growing is less profitable than growing narcissus or daffodils. We have exquisite primroses which flower nearly all the year, and are a mass of blossoms all through the winter months. It struck us that primroses in winter would be rare in towns and ought to sell well. We got some planted in a sunny corner where they did wonderfully. I asked the Dublin florist I knew whether I could send her primroses in November. She answered that primroses sell in spring, but that in winter no one would buy them. It struck me as odd, so I asked a London florist, who bought some of my violets. He gave me the same answer. Our field of primroses has gladdened our eyes for many a month, but I did not sell any. It would only require a whim of fashion to bring many orders for primroses in winter. A dinner table decorated with violets and primroses in December, would it not seem like a smile of spring when

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the snow is on the ground and the north wind blows?

I offer this idea to whoever would like to carry it out.

Our peasants are surprised to think that flowers have a monetary value—that people pay for flowers. I remember one autumn when we were walking in a wild spot at the back of the Reek, we passed a small field reclaimed from the wilderness by a poor man who had got a very scant harvest for his pains. On his field, near his meagre potatoes, rose yellow daisies in luxuriant beauty. I had seen less fine daisies in the shop windows in Dublin a few days before. I told the poor man that if he sent his daisies there he would get a very fair price. He began to laugh at the idea of getting money for wild flowers, he thought I was making fun of him, and no argument of ours could convince him that his daisies were really worth purchasing.

If Irish peasants do not believe it is possible to make money by selling flowers, they love to see flowers on the church altars on holidays,

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and they understand the message spoken by flowers to human beings with wonderful intuition.

A nun of Ballaghaderin, to whom I send flowers, (Ballaghaderin is in the same county, but, being less favoured than Westport, flowers come later and less abundant than at the foot of Croagh Patrick) told me a touching story with reference to this fact :—

It was in the month of May. She had just finished arranging our flowers on the Virgin's altar of the convent chapel when she was called away. A poor woman was awaiting the nun to tell her in despair that her child was dead. This nun is one of the good angels of the poor for many a mile around. She goes to their homes, nurses them when they are ill, comforts them in time of trouble, and in sorrow they all come to her. The stricken mother would not listen to the nun, who, at last, not knowing what to say to soothe such terrible grief, led her to the chapel, and told her to pray to the Virgin and ask the Blessed Mother to give her the

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strength to bear her grief and to accept with resignation God's Holy Will.

When the poor mother left the convent chapel, her sorrowful face wore an expression of peace. She told the nun that when she saw those flowers (she had never in her life before seen any like them) she thought that if God sends to us on earth such beautiful flowers, how much more beautiful must Heaven be. She felt that she was wrong to be rebellious at losing her well beloved son, for he would be happier in Heaven than she could ever hope to make him on earth, "and I asked the Blessed Virgin to protect him and watch over him, and now I can say God's Holy Will be done." As she spoke, she began to weep, but the tears were soothing tears and she was able to turn homeward with the wonderful resignation of an Irishwoman, ready to bear the heavy cross God had sent her.

Each May, as I send to Ballaghaderin our most exquisite white flowers: narcissus, lilies of the valley, arum lilies, roses and carnations, along with those exquisite blue

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hyacinths that in May take the place in the fields of the wild primroses and violets of April, it is with the hope that the flowers will bring to some wounded and sorrowful soul their mysterious message of peace and telling of another and a better world, which our human mind can but dimly imagine.

We planted a good many trees, to see what trees would succeed best. We have now a row of very respectable high trees that we put down quite small. As a rule trees succeed very well with us: pines, Austrian pines especially, chestnut trees, elms, larches, copper beeches, oaks, plane, all turned out successfully. We failed with accacias—at least the accacias grew, but they never flowered, and I, who was watching each June for the lovely white flowers that I loved in France, have been disappointed. Our next failure was with walnut trees. We have planted them for more than five years. Several are dead, and those that survive have scarcely grown an inch during that time.

Flowers of all kinds succeed wonderfully

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with us. The climate is so mild that, as I have said, all the winter through we have violets and primroses, not to speak of the yellow jasmine, which is very abundant, and which one learns to appreciate when other flowers are scarce. We have monthly roses the whole winter. Roses flower nearly all the year round, but in June the wealth of blooms is an ever new joy. At that time the rose is the queen of the garden. Thousands of white roses cover the walls of the garden and the gate leading to the yard. Red roses, pink roses, yellow roses, white roses, moss roses, roses of such deep red they look almost dark, and the contrast makes the French rose, which grows near, look more delicious in its delicate pink; there are roses with faint mother-of-pearl tints that remind one of precious shells from the West Indies; climbing roses; dwarf roses; giant roses; there are so many roses that one can fill baskets, and the more one cuts, the more roses one finds next morning.

But the heat comes in June and it is impossible to send roses safely to a great distance;

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they would not stand the long journey in the heat, and we have no market at hand. So I don't advise anyone who wants to make money in our neighbourhood to grow roses, but each time I see a rose tree climbing on the cottage of a peasant, I feel pleased—it is a sign that he is beginning to feel surer of the future, and it is the start of better things.

The best climbing rose we find to be the red rambler. We made it grow outside our bay window, in a very exposed, bleak place, where the gardener told us nothing would succeed, and several flowers we tried did die, but the red rambler has been a great success, it frames the windows most delightfully, and gives us a wealth of red bloom from June to September.

We made different trials as to fruit trees. Apple trees succeed very well with us. This year we got some French apple trees and I hope they will turn out satisfactorily. Pear trees do not succeed as well—at least the late pears do not ripen.

The best fruit for us is the fruit that ripens early, at the beginning of summer. We

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planted cherry trees, and these have turned out very well. Plum trees are capricious; some years we have very good plums, and other years none at all. Raspberries are abundant and delicious, and never disappoint us. They seem to succeed better than anything else. Currants and gooseberries are capricious and so are strawberries. We have had very good years for strawberries and very bad ones. In Ireland, one knows only the large strawberries which are grown in England. The delicious wild strawberries grown in France are unknown. We sent for some last year, and we chose a very good place, a sunny slope which seemed likely to be very favourable. We planted two years ago, near the same spot, some large strawberries, and we were beginning to think we must some day raise a wall or erect a wire fence to protect the fruit. Last winter, however, was so harsh, that in spite of all precautions it seems as if a great part of the strawberry plants were killed, and I think we shall have to wait sometime before we have enough strawberries to make

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it worth while to take steps to prevent boys from getting at the fruit.

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CHAPTER IV

DAN

FOR all our field work, we required men. We let Luke choose two permanent helpers, and then we gave a week's work now and again to the poorest men around. Luke chose a young man who did not remain long with us, and left to try his luck in England. His second choice was very good; it was Dan. Dan was the finest type of an Irish countryman one could meet. He was elderly and had a large family. His wife, younger than himself, was a good and active worker. Dan was in great distress when he found work with us. He had three or four acres of land, divided up in ten or twelve patches, and for this he paid a high rent. Long ago he worked at the mill and did very heavy work, and when he was no

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longer able for it, he got employed in the fields by one of the neighbours, whose death left him in a pitiable plight. He was too old to go and work in England. It is customary for the small tenants of Mayo who have too little land and too poor land to live at home all the year round, to go every spring to England or to Scotland. They work very hard in the English fields for some months, save all they can, bear great hardships, sleep on bags in barns and paddy houses, and bring home enough money to pay the rent and to have something left to feed the family during the months of winter and spring. Spring is the hardest time for the poor. As a rule the potatoes are exhausted, and they must buy food, and also seed and manure for the coming harvest. From March to July, the problem of keeping the family alive is at its keenest. July is the month of hunger; "hungry July," as they say, unless the father or son sends money from England, or unless the family has a daughter in America, who sends to her parents the greater part of her earnings. One

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hears people speak so often of the laziness of the Irish, of their want of thrift, of their carelessness, and I must say these reproaches spoken in a dogmatic tone by men who would not do half as well as the poor people they lecture, if they were in their place, have often made my blood boil. I have felt so indignant on these occasions that I thought it wiser to keep silent for fear of saying too much. But after having passed twelve years among the poorest population in Connaught, this is what I now think. The people are ready to work if they get a chance. I know men who walk four miles every morning to work in our fields, and who have the same road to walk back at night. Their small patches of land cannot occupy them all the year, and there is little employment in the neighbourhood. In Murrisk there is a fishing community, and the men can turn to fishing, but when the men are away from the sea, or have no boats, the only thing left is to go to England or to Scotland, and those who are too old or not strong enough to go, have a bad time of it. At

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certain times of the year, there are villages where one only sees women, or old men or lads. The young girls go to America. Each year, the youngest, the most vigorous depart, and one wonders what will become of a country bled to death in this way. With the help of youth and hope, those who start are full of courage, but who will say what the fathers and mothers of the young emigrants feel? As long as the girl is there, the parents keep a watch on their feelings, they smile through their tears, not to grieve the one who is going away; but once she is off in that train which carries away so many, what bitter tears are shed, and how long the road home seems to the parents who suddenly feel the weight of years. I saw our Dan, when his eldest daughter, Maggie, went away, and I remember his piteous face when he came back from the station, and his poor red eyes, and what care we took not to make any allusion to the departure, and how vain was the attempt to coax him to take a bit of dinner. When we first knew Dan, Maggie was a girl of twelve, who ran barefooted to

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school, and who was the joy and the pride of her father on account of her cleverness at her lessons, and her blooming cheeks; she was the little mother of a fine lot of boys and girls, the youngest of whom was ten months old.

Dan had the face of an old patriarch, a gentle and firm expression, and it seemed quite natural that animals should know he was their friend. He loved them all, and knew how to make them obey. He also loved his work, he was not one of the men who walked off when six o'clock struck, if anything remained to be done. He would rather pass the night, as he did many a time, attending a sick beast.

Luke got to hate this harmless, poor man. I think the beginning of the trouble was that Dan knew better how to look after cattle than Luke did, and when our lovely Kerry cow got ill, and Luke treated her in a most barbarous way, Dan made some objections. We knew nothing about it at the time. Luke had his way, and the poor cow had to swallow gunpowder. She died. There is nothing so

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painful as to be present at the sufferings of a poor, dumb animal, and to be unable to give relief. The moans of our little Kerry were almost human.

Luke was wrath with Dan, because Dan was right as to the Kerry cow. He was angry, too, because Dan was paid whilst he was ill—and Dan's wages being half that of Luke, it is hard to see where the jealousy came in. Dan was a sensitive creature, and he suffered horribly. I had a dim notion of what was going on, but only knew the truth fully later on, when grief and worry had undermined our poor old friend's health.

One of the frequent causes of discussion between Luke and Dan concerned birds. Luke would have liked to make war on them. Dan loved them, and knew his master loved them. Our garden is a retreat for birds, it is an out-of-door aviary where the most delicious songs are heard. Thrushes, blackbirds, bullfinches, goldfinches, red-breasts—they are all at home in the garden. We have also our sparrows, and though these are not usually

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appreciated, I have a soft corner in my heart for them. When I was a child in a town, I had a tame sparrow, and I remember the intense enjoyment that little creature gave to my young brother and to me, and how bright it was, and how friendly, feeding out of our plate and drinking out of our glass at dinner, never trying to fly away from us, and remaining faithful till death.

The birds in our garden are so tame that they come quite close to us—they know we love them and that they have nothing to fear.

Luke threatened that we would have no fruit if he was not allowed to shoot the birds, and his master retorted, to his unspeakable indignation, that if choice there must be, he preferred the birds to the fruit.

Whilst we were away, Luke's feelings against Dan went to such a length, that when we came home and my husband learned the facts he dismissed Luke. It was only after he left that I understood how his bad temper had made things unpleasant all around.

The worry poor Dan had gone through

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brought on a serious illness, and it took a long time before he was about again, but once he grew well, his life was a very pleasant one. We gave him charge of all our animals, and no one interfered with him to torment him about them, or anything else. Our new gardener, Maurice, as gentle in his temper as in his soft southern tongue—he is from the south of Ireland—made friends with Dan, and appreciated him, consulting with him instead of worrying him.

Among the animals that Dan looked after, were two lovely Mount St. Bernard dogs, Hofer and Empress. Hofer came to us very young. One fine winter morning he arrived. A friend sent him to us from the other end of Ireland, and the man who brought him had never left his village, and was surprised to find how large the world was. He explained to us how we should feed Hofer. I asked him if there was no fear of our spoiling him. "No," was the answer, spoken very earnestly, "Hofer is so good, he cannot be spoilt."

He was right. Hofer was thoroughly good.

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He had brown, silky hair, a long white tail which rose up like a bunch of feathers to express his joy, a fine head, gentle brown eyes, a white collar and white paws.

He cried for the whole of the first night. However, he soon grew accustomed to his new surroundings. We did not often invite him into the house, but when he found by chance the door leading to the house from the yard open, he would rush in like a hurricane. He was very young and had the destructive taste of that age and his teeth could crunch anything. I have still the trace made by his teeth on the wooden arm of the chair I am sitting in now. I invented a way of making him stay quiet. My husband had an old revolver that was out of order, and when Hofer grew too restless in the house, I gave him the revolver, and he munched it for hours at a time. It was a rattle of a new kind.

We had to watch him well at first to prevent his getting into bad ways. One day Dan noticed Hofer had an egg in his mouth and he ordered him to drop it, and Hofer gave him

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the egg unbroken; but Dan told me Hofer was vexed with him for a whole day. If Hofer had tasted the egg, our poultry yard would have suffered for it.

He followed us in our walks, and used to behave very sensibly on the road. Once in our fields, he seemed to know he was at home, and would run wildly around and roll himself on the grass.

When he saw the trunks brought to our room he guessed we were going away, and would watch me packing in a very subdued and sad frame of mind. But his joy when we came back! From the yard he knew the master's voice, calling him from one of the windows looking into the yard, and how he rushed to meet his master! Once in his joy he jumped over the half door, which separated the house from the yard, and I was thinking that I must get a higher door to keep him out but he never repeated the feat.

He loved me, but he loved the master more. He rose up and put his two paws on his shoulders, but he had enough sense not to caress

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me in that way as he would have sent me rolling on the ground.

We had Hofer for some years when we heard of a fine lady dog of the same race to be sold. Only it was far away. Empress was born at Fethard, County Tipperary,—how could we get her to Westport?

We'll send Dan! Dan had been once in a railway as far as Castlebar—our next station. Nevertheless he was quite ready for the journey, which was rather complicated. He was to remain three days away, sleeping the first night in Thurles. On the second night he and Empress were to stay in Dublin, and get back to Westport on the third day. Just before starting he told me he would soon make friends with the dog. He took some biscuits in his pocket. On the third day Dan entered our yard, followed by a big animal, larger than Hofer, tail down, a black head, (where white gave more softness to Hofer's head) and eyes tinged with blood. Hofer came behind us to see the stranger. A low growl answered his approach. The acquaintance was beginning

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badly! Then Empress was shut up. Dan gave her to eat and to drink before telling us how he got on.

He had noticed the red eyes, and he asked the dog-fancier whether Empress had a cold, and the man answered with a certain contempt for such ignorance that the red eyes were a sign of good breeding. Hofer was less pure bred it seems !—and it made him more amiable.

The journey to Dublin was not too difficult. The dog box on the railway was large enough for Empress. In Dublin, Dan looked for a place where to spend the night. He held Empress by her chain, and from several houses he was sent about his business, but at last he found a more hospitable landlady, who was willing to take him and Empress for the night, on the condition that Empress would be shut up in the stable. Dan refused. "Who knows what Empress might do, if another animal got near and frightened her?" He said he would stay up all night in the kitchen, Empress by his side, and that no one would have any

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complaint to make. It seems Empress had already made friends with Dan, and she remained very quiet all night.

At Broadstone there was trouble—"and I was afraid I would not manage to bring her home." The guard wanted to get Empress into the dog-box—the box was too small! Dan suggested placing her in the luggage van.

"I won't do that," cried the guard. "What an idea, to travel with such an animal! I have a great mind to undo the chain and let the dog run away. To whom does the animal belong?"

Dan told him his master's name. At that time we were still in the bitterness of the split which had destroyed the unity of the Irish movement, and railway officials, to a man, were on the Parnellite side. All the same the name mentioned by Dan awoke the guard's sympathy. "Oh, for him, I will take the beast in the luggage van."

At each station Dan got out and came to see Empress and talk to her. She, poor creature, was terribly frightened, and the

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terror of that journey remained on her mind all her life. It made her afraid of dark places. She never got over her fear of going down our steps. Hofer used to think nothing of going up and down, Empress would go up, but no power on earth would make her go down. We had to take her back to the yard by walking out with her.

It was decided to leave Empress alone until she was rested and Hofer was kept away, so that the acquaintance should begin later on.

Next day Empress looked better. Once we got accustomed to the black head and the bloodshot, pure-bred eyes, she was a fine creature, with something commanding in her bearing. She deserved her name.

Hofer was very anxious to get acquainted with the stranger. Each time Dan went into Empress, Hofer tried to slip in behind him. Two or three days passed. Hofer had seen Empress, and he was growing more eager to know her.

Dan said in a few days they would be great friends. One night Hofer settled himself at

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the door of Empress's abode, and spoke to her in such appealing accents, such groans and such sighs as would touch a heart of stone. He continued this all night, I could never have believed that one dog's throat could give voice to so many different sounds, all of a sad nature and without ever stopping. In the end, Empress answered, and her low cries harmonised with his moans. It was touching, but the duet kept us awake all night.

Next day Dan allowed Empress into the yard. From that day Hofer was happy and conquered. She treated him with little respect for it was she who ruled. She scolded Hofer, she barked at him, she took him by the tail or by the paw, he let her go on. He was the stronger of the two, but he never tried to retaliate on her. Sometimes we found that Empress went too far, and to teach her to behave better, we used to leave her in the yard and take Hofer for a walk with us alone. The poor dog would at least have a quiet time with us and enjoy his walk.

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But that was not at all his way of looking at it. He was intensely wretched all the while. He followed us with his tail between his legs, his head down, and whenever he could manage it, he ran back to the yard to his persecutrix. He evidently enjoyed being tormented. There are some men who have the same curious taste.

He was a model husband, but a very harsh father. He hated his children. It required all Dan's watchfulness to prevent his putting an end to them. He understood that he was not to touch those odd little beings that ran up to him so overflowing with good-nature, but his look, full of hatred, was painful to see.

You can imagine that Dan had plenty to do. He washed and brushed Hofer and Empress, and it was a pretty sight to see how much the beautiful dogs enjoyed being taken care of, and how the tails went up, and how affectionately they put their big paw in their old friend's hand. When Dan had besides to bath and look after half a dozen young Hofers, he had his hands full. But he loved his work.

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How many pretty pictures he and the dogs made, and how I used to enjoy watching them and wish I could sketch them! We tried to have them photographed, but the dogs would not remain quiet and the photograph failed. Whilst Dan was busy with his dogs we had many a chat, and among others there was one anecdote of his I used to enjoy, when I had plenty of leisure. It was at the time of an epidemic of influenza—before we knew him.

"And I could not sleep, and I could not eat, I was too tired to work. I went to the old doctor (not our good doctor of now-a-days, God bless him) and he gave me some powders. After taking the powders for some days, I felt far worse. I did not know what was wrong with me. I became a savage. One day I almost felt inclined to beat one of the children. (At the recollection of this fearful temptation, Dan's face looked careworn and sad). I got frightened. I ran to Westport and told Father Canning everything. He asked all sorts of questions, and when I answered, he

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said he knew all about it; he had gone through it all himself. 'Go home,' says he, 'burn the powders,' says he, 'and each evening,' says he, 'take oatmeal porridge and milk before going to bed, and you will see,' says he. That is what I did. I burnt the powders; I felt better. I took the porridge and milk and slept all night."

"And you were no more tempted to beat the little ones?" (I always asked the question to hear the father's hearty outburst).

"God forgive me, who could bear to harm one of those little ones?"

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CHAPTER V

GOING TO AMERICA

THE last year of Dan's life was darkened by two griefs. The departure of his daughter, Maggie, for America and his lawsuit.

Maggie was eighteen. She was a fine, tall girl, with a laughing face and eyes full of gentleness and thoughtfulness, which reminded one of her father's eyes. She had uncles and aunts and cousins in America. No family around us, but has more relations in America than at home. Some Amercian cousins had spent a summer in Dan's house, and I knew what would follow.

One day Dan told me Maggie was thinking of going to America. Friends of her age were starting in May, and his wife was getting all ready so that Maggie should travel with girls

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she knew. It is always by groups they start. There are two special trains every week from Westport to Queenstown (as from every other Irish town) to bring the emigrants to the sea. Parents and friends follow the travellers to the station; as a rule, they all try to hide their grief, but when the railway carriages are closed, when the train starts off, there rises from the sad crowd a sorrowful wail. How often, at all the stations of Ireland that sad lament rises to Heaven, so full of wild grief that it is impossible to hear it without feeling one's heart heavy and one's eyes full of tears. It is Ireland who is weeping over her children; she sobs and cries over them and no consolation can dry her tears.

But some will say, is it not better for those young men and young women to start off rather than stay in a poor country which cannot feed them? If it were so, if Ireland had not enough land to keep her children alive, we could only bow our heads and accept this tragic necessity. But such is not the case. Ireland can feed twice the population that is

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now in the island. Facts prove it. Before the great famine, Ireland was twice as populous as it is to-day.

It is arbitrary laws, made by strangers, for the sake of a few favoured strangers, which force our young girls and our young men to look for a living far away, when the vast and rich plains of Connaught are deserted, and sheep and cattle range over the fields from which men were hunted.

The people were expelled from the good lands, to allow graziers to become wealthy. If—as one is beginning to hope—a wiser and more far-sighted legislation gives back the land to the people, (there are expectations that the Land Bill, being discussed at present, will carry out that reform which is the watchword of the United Irish League), if these hopes are realized, the young men and young women will be able to live happy on their native soil, instead of going into exile beyond the seas.

Maggie came to say good-bye. She was transfigured. She who was so shy, who scarce dared to say a word the day before, answered

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very nicely my husband's questions; told him where she was going, and that her aunt expected her and would get her a situation. She would not be long sending money home.

The day after Maggie left, Dan was ten years older. He had four sons and three daughters at home, but Maggie was the apple of his eye. She was so good. She read the paper to him; she was always good-tempered. A letter from Queenstown made his mind easier, and you may be sure the first thing Maggie did on landing was to write home and describe how well she got on. She found a place very quickly, and the first money she earned arrived the next month.

Early in September, all Westport was preparing for a great meeting at which Mr. Redmond was to speak. It was a great popular demonstration, and there had been none in the neighbourhood since the starting of the United Irish league.

Maggie sent her father £2 a few days before the meeting, and wrote that he must buy a new suit for that great day. It was she and

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her mother who used to buy Dan's clothes. He would not choose a hat alone. His wife told me that Dan wanted to divide with her Maggie's present, and wished her to buy a dress, but she refused. Maggie wished her father to look well for the meeting, and her wish was fulfilled; Dan's new clothes suited him, and he had a grand air, standing upright and listening so intently to what the speakers were saying. If Maggie could have seen him as I did that day, she would have rejoiced and felt rewarded for her self-sacrifice.

Some months before the meeting—indeed very soon after Maggie's departure—the other trouble began. Dan was worried. I asked him what was on his mind. He explained it to me. It was very complicated; he had a small field, surrounded by the field of a neighbour. The patches of the small tenants are all divided up and placed in most uncomfortable places. He left that field alone for some years. This spring, he decided to put potatoes there. He had the ground ready, and was bringing up the sea-weed—our people use sea-

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weed as manure all along the coast, they often have to go into the tide to the waist to get it, and then carry it on their backs to the shore. His wife and children were helping him, when the herd who held the land around his for a rich man—a crown official and a lawyer—forbade him to pass through his master's field. For the past sixty years Dan's family had passed through the neighbour's land, to reach his own, and no one had interfered with him. His grandfather and his father had used the same path he and his family were using. He refused to give up his right, and went on with his work, putting down his potatoes. The result came quickly. His rich neighbour prosecuted him and the case was brought before the County Court Judge.

Dan consoled himself by telling me the name and history of four co-tenants who held these twenty acres for the past sixty years. The enumeration was long, and I confess I got lost in the second generation.

Dan went to Castlebar to see Lord Lucan's agent (he was one of Lord Lucan's tenants)

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and explain the trouble. Surely the agent could not ask him to go on paying rent for a field which he was not allowed to till.

The trip was useless. The agent said he could not interfere.

Dan's wife, with feminine courage, started on her own account. Before she went to Castlebar, she came to see me, and we agreed it would be well to try everything, so as to avoid a lawsuit and settle the matter amicably. The poor woman also failed. Then Dan got stubborn. He said he would not give in and he would carry on the war that was forced on him. The case was soon to be tried in Westport before the County Court Judge.

Dan was full of confidence in his good cause. He recited the names of the four co-tenants from the beginning of the co-tenancy and said how they all lived in peace and how his father and grandfather were allowed to do what they now tried to prevent him from doing, and the conviction of his right calmed him. I was not so easy in my mind. It is hard for a poor tenant to win his case

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when he has a powerful enemy to contend with.

Dan came back from the court as pale as a ghost. The judge had decided against him.

I knew it would happen thus. Early in the day, some one came to tell us that in the beginning of the proceedings, the lawyer of Dan's adversary asked Dan a question which had nothing to do with the business on hand —for whom did he work?

Dan, not guessing that his answer meant the loss of his suit, named his master, and added proudly that no man could have a kinder master. That was the end of any hope of winning the case; Dan lost. The injustice wounded him to the heart. He declared he would not give in and would appeal.

When one thinks how petty was the cause of the quarrel, how small was the patch of land, it is hard to understand the anxieties poor Dan went through. But for him that tiny field had a value no money in the world could pay; it had belonged to his father and his father's father. What he stood out for was

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his right, and the right of his children after him.

The assizes were held at Castlebar. Dan had his witnesses and took them to Castlebar. Other cases occupied longer than was expected. Dan and his party had to go several days to Castlebar. This was an expense, and, what was worse, each day's delay increased poor Dan's feverishness. When he came back he was so excited, he talked so fast, he looked so ill, that we all were anxious about his health. I tried to console him beforehand, in case things should go wrong. He must be a man; there were so many injustices done around us, that one must make up one's mind to it! But he would not hear of any fear of losing the case. This time he was bound to win.

He lost. He had to pay costs and a fine. The Judge granted him the right to go to his field *five days* in the year.

Dan refused with indignation. "Five days in the year! It was a bad joke. Who could cultivate a field in five days?"

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He talked of nothing less than refusing to pay the rent and allowing himself to be evicted. Why should he go on paying for a field he was not able to use? He would not give in.

In the end, we made him give up his fighting notions and he grew calmer. But those days of feverish anxiety and the long hours in the Court had a disastrous effect on poor Dan's health.

We were on the eve of starting from home for long months. My husband had been ordered perfect rest at sea, and we were going to Australia. I kept from Dan where we were going when I said good-bye. He was so sad, that if he had known we were going so far, he would have been sure he would never see us again.

When we landed at Naples, on our way home, I received a letter from Mallow Cottage, telling me that the Mount St. Bernard dogs were dead. Hofer died of old age; he was suffering from rheumatism when we left and it was painful to see him struggling along so stiffly, and trying to rise when his master

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called. He had lost the sight of one eye, and we had to be careful, when we gave him a dainty, to put it on the side of the good eye, or the other dogs would carry it off. Hofer died first; Paddie, the pup, a big, awkward, good-natured creature, followed soon after. Empress remained alone and sad. She was younger than Hofer, but she drooped and died of grief.

Our doctor wrote to me that Dan kept his bed since Christmas. He wanted to live to see his master, but his life hung by a thread.

When we came home our first visit was to our old friend. He was so happy to see us that he seemed better than I expected. He was admirably well taken cared of by his wife. He was resting comfortably in a bright, clean room; the bed so neat, the window was open, the children surrounded him with their loving tenderness.

"He suffered so much," said the wife. "He is always speaking of Maggie, and she, poor child, is worrying about him."

For some days, the joy of seeing us seemed

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to give him new strength. He was so anxious to live. He told me he wanted to see his children grow up; the youngest was three years old.

It was a late spring, a cold, sharp wind was blowing, which is rare, as a rule, on our sheltered coast.

Dan had a relapse. One Sunday morning our gardener, who had been like a brother in his devotion to Dan through all his illness, came to tell me that he was very bad. When we entered the room, we saw there was no hope and yet he had not lost hope, the eyes alone were alive, and they scrutinised our faces so anxiously to see what we were thinking of him.

Between two fits of coughing, he managed to say, "As long as there is life, there is hope."

The wife told us one of the Westport priests had been with him early that morning, and one of the missionaries (there was a mission going on in Westport). He had all the rites of the Church. The missionary had said such consoling, beautiful things to Dan, it did him

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good. And Dan, who could not speak, made a sign with his head that his wife was right.

He died that night, fully conscious to the last; his wife, Maurice, and the children were all around. Whenever Maurice left the room he grew uneasy. Our servants went to see Dan that evening, and he knew them and it was he who told them to go home, for it was getting late for them to be out.

I had never been at a *wake.* I used to hear of it as a barbarous custom, when people ate and drank and behaved in a very indecorous manner. What took place at Dan's *wake* seemed to me very touching. Day and night, for forty-eight hours the house was full of the relations and friends who divided up the watching. The women sat in a circle around the dead; they spoke of him; they spoke before him as if he could still hear them, and this recalling of old associations appeals to the heart. It seems to me that to watch death so near makes the dread King lose some of his terrors, and it inspires salutary thoughts as to the way one ought to look at life. In the rush

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for to soothe our poor invalid, came too late. The crowd was enormous;—cars, horsemen, people from the country and from the town; the number was a proof of the respect and affection which Dan had inspired in all who knew him.

Only a year ago at this time, Maggie was leaving home to try her luck away. Her name had been the last spoken by the poor father, and in her loneliness, the widow called out for Maggie, her big daughter, and her sobs grew more heartrending as she thought how cruelly the blow would fall on the girl's heart, away from her own people, alone among strangers. They had written to her that her father was ill, but he had been so often ailing and had rallied again, that Maggie could not realise how great the danger was, so the news would be all the sadder for her.

The poor mother had not the heart to write. She felt sure Maggie would fall ill when she knew her father was dead, and perhaps die of grief far away. And yet one could not hide

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the sad truth. Some one must tell Maggie, I offered to write.

The mother, in due time, received broken-hearted letters from Maggie, then a long silence followed. Many months later, I received Maggie's answer to my letter, and I copy it without altering a word:

"NEWARK, N. J.,
13th Sept., 1902.

"DEAR MRS. O'BRIEN,

"No doubt it is about time I was answering your very kind and consoling letter about the death of my loving father. Almighty God did not visit our nice little home in many a long year, but when He came, He came heavy and gave us a blow we will never forget as long as grass grows green and water runs down the stream. But we can't help it, for it was God's will that did it and we cannot complain, for he died as he lived, like a lamb without stain.

Well, Mrs. O'Brien, I surely like my mother, four brothers and three sisters, but I did adore and love my father, and not alone himself, but the ground he walked on. I do adore that ground to-day and will until I die, and never, no, never will I

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forget my kind and loving father, and I pray God and His Blessed Mother will give him peace and happiness, and may his bed be of the rarest rose.

And I am sure you do not forget him in your prayers, for yours will be heard above all others. What in the world would my dear mother do only for you and Mr. O'Brien that was so kind to her all this time. With all my heart and soul and mind and body I pray that God and His Blessed Mother will give both of you ninety-nine years of happiness and comfort and peace and ease in this world, and that Mr. O'Brien may never die till he gets the better of his enemies, and that was my father's constant prayer.

Now, Mrs O'Brien, I know you will be good enough to forgive me as I am hardly over my trouble yet, for not answering your letter sooner, but I could not help it, for I was worse than I let on to my mother, as it was no use in telling her, as she is bad enough. We loved our father so much, as we would not let him stoop to unlace his shoes at night when he would come home to us. And after all that, we had to part with him, but now he will suffer no more in this world. No more this time.

I remain your obedient servant,—MAGGIE."

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Maggie earns £20 a year, and the first year she sent home £13 and excused herself for keeping so much money, but her aunt made her buy warm clothes for the winter.

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CHAPTER VI

TWO HEROINES OF THE LAND WAR

O'BRIEN'S FIRST WIDOW

ONE morning Croagh Patrick had a veil of mist half way up its flanks—a mist of fairy silver and snow; the sky was of a pale grey, and one felt the sun was not far off; those signs of fine weather helped me to persuade my husband to leave his papers and come for a drive along the sea. It was in the early days of our coming to Mallow Cottage. Once the consent was given, it was not long before the car was at the door. We decided to leave Hofer at home; he was in the drawing-room with us, and when he saw we were getting ready to go out, his tail rose, expressing his wish to join us. He was a good walker, but

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not able for a run. He grew very sad when his master would not take him.

We were on the road and I looked back—there was Hofer behind us, looking at us with his good-humoured face. He saw the yard door open and rushed out. But his master was stern and we turned back. I remained on the car at the gate, whilst my husband took back Hofer, who, with tail down, followed close on his master's heels, to prove he was the most obedient of dogs. I believe that before they reached the yard, he licked his master's hand and looked at him with his wise, sagacious eyes which could read so well if his master were really angry or only pretended to be. This time what he read in his master's eyes reassured him, for there was a kind of smile on Hofer's face. Hofer had a sense of humour—a rare gift with dogs.

Whilst I was waiting on the car a poor woman came near me. She was poorly, but tidily clad, barefooted, a black shawl on her head, and a sorrowful expression on her face. She must have been good-looking when she

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was young; now she was either old, or trouble and anxiety had hollowed her cheeks and made her old before her time. She looked at me, hesitated, and then, to my surprise, she threw herself on her knees before me on the road.

I told her a little sharply to get up and tell me who she was.

"I am the most unfortunate woman on this earth, I am the widow Kitterick. I come to ask William O'Brien to have pity on me and my poor children."

I knew Mrs. Kitterick's name. One of the Westport priests told us her sad story, and asked us to give her some potato seed for her field. Two years ago her husband died after a long illness, which swallowed up their meagre means. He was a very small farmer in a rocky district at one of the extreme corners of Westport parish—"toward the West"—as the people say. His eldest son of nineteen was ailing for some time; he grew worse after the father's death and went to the hospital where he died. The cow, the only cow, died; the

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mare, their last four-footed beast, died. Mrs. Kitterick had two daughters in America, but one was ill and could not send help, and the other was married and had several children whom she was scarcely able to manage to keep alive. There was no hope from America. Mrs. Kitterick told me she had two little girls at home and a baby whom she nursed herself. "There is consumption in the family, and I nurse him because he could not eat Indian meal as we do."

It was when her husband and son died that Lord Sligo's agent summoned her to pay her rent. She and her brother Geraghty were co-tenants, and the joint rent was £9 a year. Mrs. Kitterick owed as her share two years and a half (with ejectment and costs it came to £13). She managed to get together £10 (lent by friends and relations) and the agent refused to take less than £13. As it was utterly out of her power to get those £3 she was evicted. When the sheriff and his men came, she had her baby in her arms and the two little girls held on to her skirt, sobbing.

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The eviction was carried out without any opposition, and the poor widow took refuge, with her children, in her brother's house. Geraghty was almost as poor as herself, and had more children. One had to crush in to give room to the widow and her little ones. Poor Geraghty would have been evicted too only he sold his one remaining cow—a cow he shared with his sister to pay the rent.

A young man of the neighbourhood went to Lord Sligo's agent and offered to take Mrs. Kitterick's land. The agent gave it to him, and the young man's name was put down on the rent office book as the owner of the poor widow's farm. He did not come to live in her empty house, but he began to look after his property. He walked around and saw that the hay was nearly fit for cutting. He was heard to say he would soon come to cut it. From that day the conscience of the little community rose up against the *grabber*.

To understand what the hated name of grabber means, I must ask the reader to realise the agrarian situation of Ireland, and

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to remember that the evil is at its worst in Connaught, and above all in what are called the Congested Districts. Owing to arbitrary law and old tyranny, the rural population is pushed back on very small patches and has to manage to live on the poorest of poor land. It is like living in a perpetual siege under martial law, and the judgment, which condemns the grabber who takes the land from which a tenant has been unjustly evicted, is the judgment which would condemn a man who stole food intended to be shared among the inhabitants of a besieged city, threatened by starvation. The crime of the grabber is even blacker. The only protection tenants have against unjust evictions is the chance that the evictions will not turn out profitably to the landlords, that they prove a loss to him. When nobody takes the land from which a tenant has been evicted, that desolated land, that cursed land, the landlord, who is thinking of carrying out new evictions, stops his course.

The grabber's name was hated from that day, and for fear of any harm coming to him, he was

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put under police protection. Mrs. Kitterick was a timid woman, but when she saw her enemy walk as master in her field, she was ready to run any risk to stop him. One day he came and began to cut the grass, and that was too much for her. She threw herself on him. He had little difficulty in shaking her off, and the policemen who were protecting him joined in the fray and pushed away Mrs. Kitterick, who went back crying to her brother.

He did not go on cutting the grass.

Even the most timid can be roused, and one day Mrs. Kitterick took her children and went back to her old house. She pushed open the door and re-took possession. To re-take possession when one has been evicted is a crime which English law punishes sternly. It means prison, and prison for a poor woman like Mrs. Kitterick has terrors which it is almost impossible to express.

Once she had taken possession, the punishment was not long coming. She was summoned to appear at the Petty Sessions

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in Louisburgh. This frightened her out of her wits, and that is why she came this lovely summer morning to lay her case before the only man that she supposed would take up her cause. She told her fears to my husband. He promised to do his best for her and undertook that she would not be left undefended at her trial, so she went back a little calmer. She had walked barefooted from her village of Kinnknock (it was eight miles away) and she had to walk back the same dreary road. How many times the poor barefooted creature walked that great distance, in all weathers, either to ask my husband's advice, or to tell me of some new fear which was troubling her! She was the most timid woman in the world, and how she ever had the energy to fight the grabber even for one hour and to return to her poor cottage is a mystery which became all the more puzzling as I knew her better.

At that time the Liberal Government was in power, and Mr. John Morley was the Chief Secretary for Ireland. His attention was drawn to the facts of the quarrel, and

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he sent one of the high police officials to investigate the matter. At another time, the report would very likely have been hostile to the poor widow, but this time the report was favourable. It showed her situation was even more pitiful than her own description had led us to believe. For instance, a pathetic circumstance that she did not think it worth while telling us was that the baby she suckled was three years old. The poor woman imagined that, by nursing it, she would preserve it from the consumption which killed her husband and eldest son, for she had only potatoes and Indian meal to give it.

Mr. Morley quoted in a public letter part of the Report (Sept. 21, 1894): "I have no words to describe the misery of this unfortunate creature, and her brother, Pat Geraghty, is in scarcely better plight. The furniture and everything contained in their houses, including the evicted house, is not value five shillings, and they subsist on potatoes and Indian meal, without milk, butter, or any accompaniment. They had but one cow between them, and

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this had to be sold to meet Geraghty's arrears at the time of Mrs. Kitterick's eviction, else he would have been evicted too, and there was nothing for the unfortunate creatures but the Workhouse, the last resource of the Irish peasant. I noticed to-day that she was apparently suckling a child, which she told me was three years old and of which I have no doubt. I asked her why she did so unusual a thing. She said she had no other way of giving milk to it and that it would die on potatoes. This horrible picture," went on Mr. Morley, "is painted not by an excitable politician, but by a cool, matter-of-fact official. It is not for me on this occasion to draw the moral, nor to decide whether the landlord might not rather have been expected to make the woman a present of a cow than to take the one cow she had away from her." Did ever Chief Secretary write in such revolutionary spirit? All Dublin Castle was indignant.

My husband went with Mr. Davitt, who was paying us a visit, to Mrs. Kitterick's village, to see if nothing could be done to persuade the

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grabber to give up what was of so little use to him.

The fields that were in dispute were poorer than the description had led us to imagine. The miserable grass, over which Mrs. Kitterick and the grabber fought, had never been touched and was rotting away. Mrs. Kitterick was camping in her empty house—the poor three years' old boy looked like a little old man. He did not walk, he never was able to walk, and he was haunted by the terror of the eviction; at night he woke up sobbing and would struggle in his mother's arms and call out that the sheriff was coming. By day, she carried him on her back, and I often saw her with the child on her shoulder. When she put him down on the ground, he cried, and however tired the poor mother might be, she took him up again. Mrs. Kitterick's brother, as I have said, was nearly as poor as herself. He was older, and had a good, expressive face, deeply lined. His clothes were so tattered and worn that they had to be tied with twine to prevent their falling to pieces; his wife was a strong,

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rather hard looking woman, surrounded by a great many children.

Mr. Davitt and my husband met the grabber and his mother in a field (they had been told that the mother was stiffer to deal with than the son, and so they found it). They began to talk to him, and to tell him that he would be a happier man if he gave back the land to the widow, than if he went on with his fight. He listened with a hesitating expression on his face, not looking like a man ready for a struggle. His mother was afraid he would give in, and she called in Irish (little thinking the gentlemen could understand) that if he gave in he would have to do with her. He was evidently more terrified of his mother's anger than of his neighbour's indignation, and he answered that he could not give up what was his own.

Thus war was declared. We paid several visits to Mrs. Kitterick about that time, and on one occasion an English novelist, Edna Lyall, came with us. She was deeply moved by what she saw. The poverty of Mrs. Kit-

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terick's home went to her heart, and she was touched by the simple and cordial manner in which the poor widow expressed her gratitude for the sympathy shown her by a stranger. She was surprised to hear a peasant speak so well, and one phrase of Mrs. Kitterick's struck her in particular: the widow was telling of her despair at the death of her husband and her son. "Everything that was good in the world died for me the day they died."

The courageous and smiling poverty of Geraghty, the poor man with the ragged clothes, made also a deep impression on the English visitor. She took photographs of Mrs. Kitterick, her children, her brother and the field with the cut hay rotting. The photographs turned out very well.

From that time till her death, Edna Lyall every year sent me money for my poor at Christmas, adding not to forget Mrs. Kitterick and her brother. Last Christmas the cheque arrived as usual, and a note saying she was not feeling well. She died soon after. She was a charming woman as well as a charming writer.

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We were at Mrs. Kitterick's a few days before her case was to be tried at Louisburgh. She was very anxious. Her brother and a few neighbours were crowding around my husband to know his opinion. The door of the cottage was open, and Mrs. Kitterick's children and her brother's children were sitting outside in a picturesque group that would have tempted a painter.

Regular footsteps resounded behind the house.

"The police," exclaimed Mrs. Kitterick, "the policemen are coming to spy on us."

We rushed out and saw two policemen walking quickly away.

My husband called out that he would see what it all meant, and he ran towards the policemen, followed by poor Geraghty, who tried in vain to keep him back, for to have anything to say to a policeman seemed to him a dangerous matter.

The policemen stopped, and from a distance we saw that they were talking. The conversa-

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tion was lengthy and we were curious to know what was going on.

Geraghty rushed to us, radiant. "All is well over," he said, "I was so frightened. He would not listen to me. If you had heard him speak to those policemen—he made them shiver, he made them shiver!" he repeated, exultantly raising his trembling hands.

My husband came back smiling. The policemen meant no harm. They did not know he was there. They were out for a walk. One of them knew him long ago. They met in the South of Ireland years before, and a sign that he must be a good fellow was, that after so many years in the force, he had not got the promotion he was entitled to. This policeman told my husband that the united opinion of the force went against the grabber. Two men had to watch him night and day, for fear of his being attacked, and the policemen found it very unpleasant to be disturbed from their accustomed life of ease. They had expressed to him their view that he was doing a very foolish thing, and that it would be

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much wiser for him to give up the widow's land.

We were surprised and pleased to hear that such good advice came from such an unexpected quarter.

On Tuesday, September 25th, 1894, at the Louisburgh petty sessions, the case against Widow Kitterick was heard, and the widow was charged by the grabber with having forcibly entered the house and land from which she was evicted by her landlord, Lord Sligo, in July last.

Mrs. Kitterick was pale and trembling. Her black shawl framed in a terrified face. Her brother was not wearing his picturesque but ragged costume, for he had borrowed the clothes of some kindly neighbour and looked a comfortable farmer. It is one of the characteristics of the poor people in this country, that instead of showing their poverty, they try to hide it, and many a time people who would not know the facts of the case, might believe a very poor man to be comfortably off, without guessing that the clothes which had

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impressed them were borrowed from kindly neighbours, so as not to appear too badly before the world. I was accustomed to the opposite way with less simple-minded people.

An eminent lawyer came down from Dublin to defend the poor widow (as he has so often defended poor, persecuted tenants all through Ireland). We were not then under a coercion regime. The judges were not chosen on purpose to convict the accused. There was only one representative of Dublin Castle among the magistrates, and the magistrates, with one dissentient voice, acquitted Mrs. Kitterick.

Joy made Mrs. Kitterick young and handsome. Her gratitude expressed itself in a most charming and eloquent little speech. She had good reasons to rejoice. Not only had she escaped prison, but a subscription had been opened in her favour and had brought in thirty three pounds. It was a fortune!

The moment the trial was over, Father Joyce, the patriotic parish priest of Louisburgh, who for the past thirty years brought to a miserably down-trodden population the consolations of

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religion and the manly encouragement of an unshakable patriotism, went to the fair, which had brought a great crowd to the quiet little town, and bought, for eight pounds of the money collected for the widow, a fine black cow. Mrs. Kitterick came home that evening in triumph with her cow, followed by her brother and neighbours, all rejoicing in her good fortune.

The crowd gathered in Louisburgh by the fair, broke out into cheers when the result of the trial was known. "A platform was erected near the market-place, around which a crowd of several hundred people assembled, cheering for Mrs. Kitterick and her counsel, Mr. Bodkin, for Messrs Davitt and O'Brien. The Reverend W. Joyce, P.P., Louisburgh, was voted to the chair amidst loud cheers."

The crowd applauded the men who had taken the widow's cause in hand. Mr. Davitt's speech in response made me feel somewhat nervous, for having paid a due tribute to the eloquent lawyer who defended Mrs. Kitterick, he ended his speech by advising 'every widow

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from the South or from the East to the West, who suffered wrong in Ireland, to ask William O'Brien to come and champion her cause," And, as a matter of fact, "O'Brien's widow" (as Mr. Davitt christened Mrs. Kitterick) was followed by many another.

The grabber gave up later on his claim to his ill-gotten farm and went away, but the Rent Office went on looking on him as the tenant, and when some years afterwards Mrs. Kitterick settled with the landlord and paid her arrears, the only receipt she got was in his name. This was a great trouble. How many a time she came weeping to tell me she heard that her enemy was coming to claim his rights on the farm! He, however, had more sense. He went to England. Soon the Rent Office raised the rent. Before the eviction Mrs. Kitterick and her brother paid nine pounds a year between them. Now it was five pounds each. However, the brother and sister were feeling in very good humour. Geraghty had been given a pig out of the money subscribed, and his sister had a cow, and a very fair sum was

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left for her and her children in the hands of Father McGirr, the Administrator of Westport.

She had some peaceful years, overshadowed, alas! by one anxiety—the sickness of her poor little son. We had hoped the cow's milk would give back health to the little boy, but it was too late. Two years passed. There was no use shutting one's eyes to the fact that the poor child did not yet walk. People suggested the Children's Hospital in Dublin, and a kind friend sent me a ticket of admission to the Hospital.

The mother longed to send the child to Dublin. We made a fine dress for him; a young girl from Westport was going up and she undertook to take the child to Temple Street. All was settled. On the morning of the day fixed for the journey, I sent a car for Mrs. Kitterick and her son. She arrived with her most anxious face and told me the child would not live away from her—he would have convulsions as soon as she left him. She said this before the boy, who understood perfectly

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and was ready to struggle to the death not to leave his mother. The poor little creature refused to touch any food; his whole body was ready for the struggle, and it was pitiable to see the little, old face so full of care. I was very much puzzled to know what to do, and as I had so often done before, I thought in my difficulty of our kind friend the doctor. I told Mrs. Kitterick that before sending the child to Dublin, we would go to the doctor, and ask his advice. He examined the child and then came to tell me there was no hope of curing him, and that it would be cruel to part the child from the mother. To Mrs. Kitterick he said that country air and cod liver oil were better for the child than the best hospital. She understood that the child was incurable, and she, who had wept so much at the thought of parting with him, wept more bitterly when she was told she could take her boy home.

Happily the child did not realise what going back meant, and he was delighted. When he got back to Mallow Cottage he ate his dinner with an appetite and was almost

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cheerful. He took pleasure in the dress we had to put on before he went to the doctor, and which he took no notice of at the time. Boys wear dresses in the poor districts till they are eight or ten—sometimes older. A dress is cheaper and more easily made than a suit of boy's clothes, which mothers are not able to make, while they can often manage the little dresses.

The drive home on the car was one of the rare joys of the poor little creature. Every thing was so new and strange to him. The drive from Westport to his village took him through such a wonderful big world.

The years that followed were sad for the poor mother. The child constantly ailing, and illness made him cross. One day Mrs. Kitterick came to consult me in a very mysterious manner. She told me she was disturbed in her mind. The child was not like other children. The fairies had carried away her child, and had put a changeling, a monster, in his place. "When you get home sprinkle the child with holy water," said our

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old cook, "and you will find all will be well." Mrs. Kitterick went home comforted.

One of Mrs. Kitterick's little girls was thirteen years old. The sisters in America sent home her passage ticket. The mother brought the girl to me on the eve of her departure. The child looked nice and bright but very thin. She was too shy to speak, but her eyes were most eloquent. She had no pocket in her dress, and I gave her a pocket. It was pleasant to see the expression of intense joy on the girl's face when she put her hand for the first time in her life in a pocket; and how proud she was to put in it her purse, her beads and all her treasures. It is good to be poor and to have nothing—one has a power of enjoyment that the well-to-do people of this world are incapable of. She had never been further than Louisburgh, so Westport was to her a city of wonders. The journey into the unknown did not frighten her. Neighbours' children were going too, and there was one girl who had been in America before, and who took charge of the whole party. The mother

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was crying at the thought of parting with Julia, but Julia had no tears to spare. She said she would write, and so she did soon after landing, saying that her sister had put her to school.

Mrs. Kitterick remained with her youngest daughter, her sick boy and an old woman. I forgot to say that, in the midst of all her troubles, after her eviction, and when she was trembling at the thought of being sent to jail, she took under her roof a poor old woman, poorer than herself, who had no shelter.

How often I have been struck by this adoption of an elderly person or of a child at a time of such distress as to make the act truly heroic! Never do they who practice such real and touching charity guess the impression it makes on strangers. It seems quite natural to these kind-hearted people. How could one leave an orphan homeless, or how could one let an old, decent woman go to the workhouse? Those poor creatures hate the very name of the workhouse; they prefer to starve in the fields rather than be shut up in that

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black building which rises so gloomily above Westport, and which has such a sad history, made up of tragedies since the famine time!

Mrs. Kitterick's daughters were very anxious to bring their mother to America. They wrote promising to send the passage for herself and the children. She came to read the letter to me. She was anxious to go, and yet afraid to go. She could not travel with the sick boy, and she could not leave him behind.

"What would become of the old woman, if you went away?" I asked.

"One of the neighbours has offered to take her."

But the difficulty as to the boy could not be got over.

The child was growing worse; he never slept at night, and the mother watched by his side. At eight years old, the poor little creature ended the long agony that life had been to him, all pain and no joy. His mother wept for him as a mother weeps for the child who

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has made her suffer, and whom she loves more passionately for the sake of the suffering. She was ill for a long time after his death.

Then she began to think of going to America. She took a long time to make up her mind. It is harder for an elderly woman to leave the country where she had spent all her life, and where all is familiar to her, and Mrs. Kitterick knew how to create imaginary torments, when the real troubles of life would have been sufficient. But a new blow had come to her. The married daughter lost her husband; the mother felt herself needed where there was trouble. She came to tell me she had made up her mind to go to America.

I asked her what she wanted to buy most for the journey, and I promised to give it to her. Her wish was a modest one; a small trunk, or as she said, a *trunkeen*, and she explained to me that if she had her *trunkeen*, she could put her things into it, and above all she could bring her daughters in America a bottle of the water of the Holy Well of Kilgeever. She would go and pray at the well

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before starting, and the daughters would be so happy to have some of the holy water. I had not the heart to say that very likely the bottle would get broken, and her clothes get wet. The idea of possessing a trunk made her feel so pleased that she was almost consoled when she started for home, leaving me her seven blessings and the seven blessings of of each her children. It is always by seven that one receives either blessings or curses.

Mrs. Kitterick put off her departure two or three times, and when she came to say good-bye for good, we were away. The servants said that when she said good-bye to all in Mallow Cottage, she cried and sobbed in a heart-breaking way, and prayed for the master and mistress, as if she could never bear to leave them.

The youngest daughter wrote to me from America, shortly after they landed. Her letter was sad. Her mother felt very desolate. America was not at all what she expected; she felt ill; the climate did not agree with her, and she was wondering if, before she died, she

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would once again have the joy of seeing the loved soil of Ireland.

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CHAPTER VII

TWO HEROINES OF THE LAND WAR

O'BRIEN'S SECOND WIDOW

O'BRIEN'S second widow was a different being from Mrs. Kitterick. She was a heroine who might have walked by Joan of Arc's side and faced the enemy with a smile. Small, thin, sun-burnt, yet with eyes full of life and a smile so expressive that it transfigured her face, as Croagh Patrick, on his dark days, is transfigured by a ray of sunshine which brings out all the emerald green of the tiny fields on the mountain's bare flanks.

Mrs. Sammon lost her husband, a small tenant who had paid his rent in a most regular way as long as he was able to work, and was the possessor of one cow. His illness was

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long, and the means of the family were spent whilst he was on his sick bed. The husband dead, the widow remained with nine children, the eldest—a girl—twelve years old, and the youngest one year old. But she prepared to do her best to keep her children alive. Accustomed to work in the fields, she had many a time helped her husband, and when his strength failed him, she did his work as well as she could. The agent of Lord Sligo notified to her that two years' rent was due. She asked for time to earn what she owed. He refused to give her any time. She sold her cow for £7; she owed £14. 14s. She offered one year's rent, the price of the cow; the agent, however, refused to take anything but the whole amount due, and the poor woman was evicted with her nine children. Opposite her farm was the school. She took refuge in a room intended for the schoolmistress, who had preferred living with her people, and the room was standing empty.

The farm was at once taken by a man in the pay of the rent-office. This man, an ex-

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game-keeper, had a farm which a bailiff was anxious to have. The bailiff offered to give him Mrs. Sammon's farm in exchange for his own, and the grabber accepted.

From that day war was declared between the grabber and Mrs. Sammon. She followed him at fairs and markets, and when he wanted to sell his cattle, she called out to all buyers that this man had grabbed her farm, and the buyers went off and the grabber took his cattle home. But he had his revenge. Mrs. Sammon was sent to jail for two or three months.

The first time I heard of Mrs. Sammon, she was coming out of jail. Her children were ill, and were sleeping on the bare ground. She had nothing to give them to eat except Indian meal. A neighbour advised her to come and see us, as her means were exhausted. After the eviction, as long as the seven pounds she had in vain offered to the agent, lasted, she did not think of asking for help. I must say that, during all the years I have known her, she has very seldom come to tell me of her distress, and then only when her need was very great.

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My husband had heard of her eviction and cruel treatment, and he asked her how the grabber was behaving to her since she came out of jail. She had one of her smiles—more eloquent than a speech—and replied simply that he did not sell any more sheep since she came out of jail. That was all. A friend who had been in Westport, and who had been present at the fair, told us with what pluck Mrs. Sammons put to flight the grabber and his sheep.

She had soon to go back to jail. This time she went with a heavy heart, for the children were not quite well yet. The eldest daughter (barely thirteen) who had gone to her grandparents after the eviction, came back to take her mother's place. One evening, we were coming home from Leenane and we passed near Carrowkennedy, that is the name of Mrs. Sammon's village. My husband told our driver to stop at the school. He knocked for a long time; at last the door was half opened and a girl appeared, looking very nervous. My husband explained we were friends, and

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we walked in. Around the hearth, where smouldered a turf fire, eight children sat closely to one another; they looked at us with anxious eyes. When the eldest girl heard our name she grew a little reassured, and answered my husband's questions.

Mrs. Sammon had told us the strict truth. The children had nothing but the bare ground to lie on. The room was so small and bare that I believed at first there must be another, but when I asked, I found it was all. The eldest girl seemed very shy, and she was very young to have so many children to look after. The group of small creatures huddled up around the fire, which threw a light on their anxious faces, made us feel sad.

My husband wrote a letter to the *Freeman*, giving Mrs. Sammon's sad story. After having told how she was evicted, he went on:—

"The following is an account of her history since. On the 9th of February, the widow Sammon was sent to jail for a week for designating as a land-grabber the man who took the farm from which she and her children were evicted. In March she

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was sent to jail for seven weeks with hard labour, for repeating the crime. A week after her release in May she was sent to jail for the third time for five weeks, and hard labour, for being of the same opinion still. The next time, a few days after leaving prison in June, she was prosecuted on a charge of knocking down a wall, valued at six shillings, for which the mother of the nine hungry children was consigned to the plank bed for fourteen days more. She had scarcely returned to her hut when she was hauled before the magistrates for the fifth time for throwing some sods of turf, valued at one penny, in a bog hole, and for 'abusive language.' She was fined five shillings and costs, and, in default of bail for her future good conduct, was sentenced to imprisonment for two months more; and the day before yesterday, in tears and her spirit at last broken, she was dragged away from her children by the police to undergo a new sentence—that is to say, out of nine months since her eviction, she will have passed more than six months under punishment, and all for what President Kruger would call "moral damages" to the ex-gamekeeper's feelings. It was not pretended that he had suffered any more substantial injury, and in any mere contest of

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physical strength it would have been too grotesque to allege that the ex-gamekeeper, with two strapping young men for sons and a special police escort, had anything to fear from the hunted widow, whose eldest son is but eight years old. Mr. Lynch, R.M., in sending her to jail for the last time, thought it decent to add: 'She appeared to be a lunatic.'—(*Mayo News*, Aug. 28th.)

"If Mr. Lynch, R.M., had been deprived of his only means of livelihood without a penny of compensation, for a debt of £14 14s., and left to support nine helpless children on 2s. a week, outdoor relief, he would possibly have more charity for the lunatic way of looking at matters. His sympathies would be quickened if he found himself sentenced to spend six months out of nine on the plank bed for not being able to cultivate the temper and tongue of an archangel in his intercourse with the author of his miseries. The sight of the eldest child, a girl of twelve or thirteen, acting as father and mother of the lonely little household, lighting the fire, boiling the stirabout, dressing, washing and nursing the little group of brothers

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and sisters that hung about her, was inexpressibly touching,"—(*Freeman's Journal*, Sept. 8th, 1897).

The letter awoke public sympathy. The next post brought a cheque of £5 from the venerable Archbishop of Cashel, and a letter in which he expressed once again his detestation "for the ignoble trade of the land grabber." Other subscriptions followed, and when Mrs. Sammon came out of jail, she did not know her home. Two beds were in one corner. A cow, belonging to her, was feeding in a field hired for her from a neighbour. Next spring, another field was hired and potatoes were put down by the neighbours, who tilled the widow's field. The subscriptions mounted to a handsome sum, and the money helped Mrs. Sammon to bring up her children in those difficult years when they were too young to earn anything.

The struggle with the grabber went on. He retorted with blows to Mrs. Sammon's words. He threw stones at her children. One of her boys got wounded on the head and she

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had to take the child to Westport to the doctor to get his wound dressed. The grabber prosecuted Mrs. Sammon for having thrown down a wall. She retorted by a summons, accusing him of having hurt her son. Mrs. Sammon got three months in jail and the grabber was bound to give bail and find two securities for his good behaviour or go to jail for three months. Strange to say, no one, not even the rent office, would go bail for the grabber and he had to go to jail. I assure you that Mrs. Sammon was quite consoled spending three months' imprisonment in Castlebar jail by the thought that her enemy was shut within the same walls.

When the grabber came out of prison, he was almost tempted to give up Mrs. Sammon's farm, but his wife would not hear of it. Years went on; an iron police hut rose on the hill close to the grabber's house, garrisoned by five armed men to protect the grabber from the attacks of one unarmed woman.

On the other side of the road, in the little room, the widow and her children lived on. Her

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eldest son grew up, and he went to work in the South of Ireland. The eldest daughter went to America.

All the neighbours were on Mrs. Sammon's side. No one went near the grabber, or his family, no one spoke to him. One did him no harm, but he was left severely alone, the policemen alone were willing to chat with him.

He found in Westport some shop-keepers who traded with him, buying from them what he required, and with their help selling his cattle. He gave up going to fair or market, for he knews Mrs. Sammon would be there too. As the struggle went on, his own courage gave way. There were days when he felt heavy hearted, and he wondered if it would not have been better to give up the farm and live at peace again. But his wife scolded him when he hinted at a surrender, and to excuse himself he said that he was not well and that illness was undermining his strength. He went to the Westport Workhouse Hospital. As soon as it was known in the Hospital that the

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grabber was there, the patients kept aloof from him, as his neighbours did; no one in the ward would exchange a word with him, and he felt very lonely.

A good Nationalist of Westport who was in the hospital at the time was the only one who broke the rule. He began to chat with him. Those who knew him could not imagine what made a worthy man speak to a grabber. He was trying to persuade him to give up the farm and live in peace.

He was on the point of agreeing. He even went so far as to say that if he got some money as compensation, he would go away, provided his wife agreed to it. But he dare not decide anything without consulting her, and when he went home, she would not hear of going away.

Soon after, the grabber fell ill again. He went back to the Hospital, and he died there. Since then, the two women live on the two sides of the road.

It is to be hoped that when the Land Bill is passed, Mrs. Sammon will be among the

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evicted tenants who will get back their farms, or other farms equal in value.[1]

In the meantime she is busy, she looks after her crops, she attends to her cow. The last time I drove along the Leenane road, I stopped to see her. I opened the door; the room was empty—no, not empty! In a corner was lying a very pretty, young, brown calf, his mouth tied up with a stocking to prevent his eating any of the straw on which he was lying,—exactly in the same way as we saw a calf tied up in Tunis some years ago. A doll hung near the window; the beds were neatly made up and there was a bag of flour in a corner. The home was small for a family of six—(another son, a boy of thirteen, was gone to America. His sister, who sent for him, put him to school when he arrived). It was a cramped space to live in, all the more so if one had to take in the calf—and even at times, I fancy, the cow—but it was not the hopeless poverty of the

[1] This was written while Mr. Wyndham's Land Bill of 1903 was passing through the House of Commons. Up to the present unhappily the new Act has had no effect on Lord Sligo's estate.

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early days after the eviction, when they all lay on the floor and had to live on Indian meal.

I asked a neighbour where was Mrs. Sammon and the children. He told me the children were in the fields and Mrs. Sammon had gone to Westport. He spoke of her with respect. This heroine of the Land War deserves respect, she who passed so many weary months in jail, who fought the judges, the lawyers, the police, all the forces of the coercion *régime*—there were days when she made speeches a skilled lawyer would not have been ashamed of. The judge used to order her to be silent. Each word meant a longer sentence, but when she was roused nothing could stop her.

"He is a grabber," she cried, her arms stretched out towards her enemy. "He is a grabber, and as long as I live I will call him a grabber, a grabber."

Then two sturdy policeman, on a sign from the judge, would take hold of Mrs. Sammon, and as she was being dragged out of Court, she would call out with all her strength, "He is a grabber!"

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That time she had to remain in jail six months. But as she told me later on, should she rot in prison, she had to say what was in her mind, and to escape from the scaffold, she would not have remained silent before her oppressor.

The pluck of Mrs. Sammon had consequences which one cannot exaggerate. She made the life of her grabber so uncomfortable that those people, who might have been tempted to grab a neighbour's farm, thought twice about it and preferred to live in peace. Many a tenant who was in arrears got from his landlord time to pay his rent. The landlord knew if he evicted him, it would not profit him anything, for no one would take up the farm, so it was better for him to be patient. At the time of Mrs. Sammon's eviction, all popular agitation was dead; a feeling akin to despair was pervading the country. Some months later, the new popular organisation, the United Irish League, started in Westport. It has united in one camp the divided forces of National Ireland. Who knows, if the land-

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lord had listened to the appeal made by my husband in Mrs. Sammon's favour, in the letter I quoted from before—if he had accepted Mrs. Sammon back as tenant and given the ex-gamekeeper his former farm—who knows if the new organisation would ever have come to life!

"The new Marquis of Sligo is a man of ability, and has given more than one token of a liberal spirit since he came to the title. He cannot think it is wisdom or even economy, for the sake of a debt of £14. 14s., to his great rental to keep this sore festering in the midst of his estate. If he would only with a stroke of the pen restore both the ex-gamekeeper and Mrs. Sammon to their old holdings, he would earn the thanks of the whole community and—not the least warmly—mine.

"It is not with a light heart that anybody in the present distracted state of public feeling can face the risk of a struggle against all the powers of a landlord government, with the dagger of Coercion up their sleeves—perhaps against more heart-breaking antagonists nearer home."

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The appeal for mercy was not heard. Mrs. Sammon was persecuted and the struggle she entered upon gave the impetus which woke up public feeling throughout Ireland in a way unheard of in any ordinary local fight.

In the good old times, half a century ago, nay, twenty-five years ago, Mrs. Sammon and her children and many another family would have been evicted. Once on the road, helpless, the workhouse would have been their only shelter. No tenants would dare take an evicted family into their house for fear of being evicted. How many unpunished crimes have been committed in the county Mayo and all through Ireland,—at the foot of the mountains, in the rich plains, in the delicious valleys, which the tourist is surprised to find now-a-days all deserted. The explanation of the facts would enable him to understand the hatred aroused by the word 'landlordism.'

At the time of the Famine—of the Great Famine—as if starvation had not killed off enough of the people, the landlords made clearances on a large scale. They hunted

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away whole populations, to hire those tracts to a few rich men, who would replace human beings by black-faced sheep and bullocks—cattle were more profitable than men. In those days a landlord could evict as he pleased—to-day, as long as a tenant pays his rent, he has nothing to fear. Long ago, this guaranty failed. The poor people went to die in the workhouses, others went to some Scotch or English sea-side town, they were too poor to go to America. They fell into the deepest misery in some poor suburb of an English or Scotch town. Their descendants do not even know they are Irish, they have lost their rustic virtues and gained vices unknown in their mountain homes.

The book of a Scotchman named Caird, written towards 1850, throws a lurid light on the substitution of cattle for men. He tells of his visits to several of the great Mayo landlords, who consulted this expert on the advantages of the transaction. He found the arrangement a good one pecuniarily. On the moral point of view he expresses no opinion.

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In his book he calls the attention of his countrymen to such or such property which is awaiting any willing man to turn to grazing. As soon as one will appear he explains the population will be expelled. Willing men did turn up and took possession of the rich lands.

Sometimes the landlords allowed the tenants, expelled from their farms, to settle down on a mountain flank, among the rocks or down in the boggy marshes. Two or three acres of worthless land might bring some extra revenue to the landlord; and each time the tenant improved the land by years of labour, the rent could be raised. This explains why the rich plains are deserted from Westport to Leenane, from Westport to Newport, and in many another place, where for miles, one only sees a shepherd's hut, but in the corners, where the land is poor, the population is congested. For instance, the village of Glaush, near the sea, belonging to the same landlord who holds the deserted tracts around Leenane, has a population of ten tenants, who

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have eighteen acres between themselves, of the poorest land, for which they pay higher rents than the farmers pay for good land in the rich southern counties.

Divine justice is slow, but even in this life we sometimes have the comfort of seeing crimes punished. The men who got rich by those cruel clearances have all been ruined. They and their families are struggling miserably on their ranches, or else they have had to fly away. The remembrance of their crime against humanity remains alone, and if you have the good fortune to meet near Leenane a tall, old man named Phil of Letterass, he will give you such details of the harrowing scenes he witnessed in his childhood, as will bring the whole tragedy so vividly before your eyes that you will feel you too have seen it.

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CHAPTER VIII

PHIL OF LETTERASS

It was a wet morning. The rain was coming down so straight that there was little chance of a break, and it had been raining all night.

When I went to the kitchen after breakfast, the cook told me a man had come from Leenane to see the master. He had walked part of the night, and when he arrived he was so wet that she did not like to send him away, though it was so early. She made him dry himself at the fire, gave him his breakfast and told him to wait.

It was a morning when the master was very busy and I did not feel too well disposed towards the stranger who came to disturb him so early.

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Under Croagh Patrick

Phil of Letterass at once impressed me well. His first words inspired confidence. "I knew the master in Galway Jail," he told me. "I was there at the same time." Strange country you will say, where the fact of having been in jail opens the heart; strange times, when not to have been in jail is a cause of shame one is anxious to be rid of. I know a young journalist who, in spite of his good-will, had never seen the inside of a prison till this winter. At last his chance came. He was condemned. The case was to be heard again. An old friend, wishing the young man a happy Christmas added that she hoped he would escape imprisonment. I have still a wish to laugh when I recall the dark look of the young journalist listening to such an unkind wish, it seemed to him a mortal offence. The wish was not realised for he did see the inside of Mountjoy Prison.

Phil was tall, with the frame of a giant, strong features, bushy eyebrows over deep-set eyes and a big mouth, with a serious expression. He had a pleasant voice and expressed himself

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well. "A strongly marked Celtic face, prompt to light up with passion, but prompter to beam all over with the rich intelligence which an early education might well have developed into something not too far from genius; a soft voice soused in the dulcet Gaelic speech, and a turn of phrase which gives you a mountain poem, fresh as a mountain rill in every sentence," writes one who spent some months in jail with him.

I asked him what he wanted.

"I wished to see the master and to talk with him and to ask his advice."

And that was the fact; it was to talk with my husband that he had walked such a great distance—(There are sixteen Irish miles between Leenane and Westport)—on this wet day.

My husband sent him word he would see him as soon as his work was done. Phil settled down quite happily in the kitchen and never dreamt of finding the time long. To wait two or three hours, to wait a whole day, seems so easy to these people, whose patience

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often fills me with wonder and respect. This great patience has its bad side. It makes people lose somewhat the notion of time, and people so ready to wait do not realise that time has its value. Very often they wait too long; for instance, when they come to consult you about something, which ought to have been done long ago, and when nothing more can be done.

The meeting between the two jail-birds was very cordial. My husband remembered Phil well, and his long struggle against landlord tyranny—a struggle which lasted half a century, and with most exciting incidents. The struggle began many a year ago, at the time of the great famine, when the village of Letterass, near Leenane, as well as all the country around, was swept of its population. It was a terrible time.

"I was a child," says Phil, "but I remember the day of the eviction as if it were yesterday. It was snowing and we had no shelter. We spent the night out. A mother was nursing her child; at day-break she was dead, holding

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in her lifeless arms the baby that was still alive. Many another died at that time. I am heart-struck with sorrow when I think of it," he adds, in a subdued tone, "may the Lord rest them all! My father had a little boat and turned it up to protect the little ones from the piercing cold and set out himself for a job of work to buy them food. In his absence, Lord Lucan's bailiff arrived and burnt down the boat and did not leave a cinder of the fishing-nets we lay on to keep us from the dampness of the ground. One of the children died of exposure. We took him to the burying-ground of the village of my birth, Letterass, but Lord Lucan's bailiff and the men who grabbed the land were there before us and put the law against our burying him there. They thought my father would quote it against the grabber on the title. We had to return over the mountains and bury him far away in Glenagimla. The people had no heart after the famishing and the exposure of the evictions, and from that day forward, over land and fishing, Lord Lucan and Lord Sligo and the

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grabber all joined themselves together and became the gods of Killery Bay."

When the old man speaks of the night in the snow or the scene at the grave-yard, when his father was not allowed to bury his son near his own people, and had to go many miles away to beg from strangers the charity of a grave, his voice trembles and he feels to-day the emotion that filled his father's heart with maddening grief.

"We were so happy around Leenane," he goes on, "before all these troubles. There were so many peaceful homes around Killery Bay, that if one evening you had dropped a pin, you would have found it by the light coming from those happy cottages. Before my father died he made me swear never to give up my right to Letterass, but to carry on the struggle against landlord and agent and bailiff. I kept my word. I think I did my best." And he smiles as he stands upright before us.

The struggle meant Phil being in jail in 1867 as a Fenian suspect, in 1881 as a Land

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League suspect, and again he was put in jail in 1888. That was the time my husband met him.

"We are struggling now," he goes on, "as to the right of fishing near the entrance to the river. The landlord claims the right, and we say God gave the right to every man who is able to fish. We were defeated in one Court, but we are going to carry it before a higher tribunal." And it was about this new lawsuit he came to consult my husband.

I was surprised to hear later on that Phil and his friends won their case, but the landlord carried it out before another tribunal, and I suppose the fight is going on to this day. But lawsuits do not help one to live; on the contrary they are an expensive luxury. To gain what will keep his family alive, to pay his share of the law costs, Phil goes every year to Scotland and works in a red-hot iron foundry in Glasgow. It is very hard and dangerous work, but well paid.

"I come home every year," says Phil; "I keep my wife and children near Leenane. I

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don't want to give up my claims to the land of Letterass."

Once the talk was over our friend was starting off. He did not think of asking for anything, would have been pained if he thought we fancied he wanted any money. He wanted only to have a chat with and to hear the view of his co-prisoner on the new case he was thinking of. Often have I been present at consultations of this kind in which there was no thought of begging, yet many of those who came were poor, far poorer than our friend Phil, who, in those days was strong, and earned a fair wage in Scotland.

The day was far advanced when Phil was ready to go. It would be night when he got home. I ran after him to remind him his dinner was ready and he must eat it. It was cold beef, and when he was finished he told me it was very good, though he did not know what he had eaten. This surprised me. A man who did not know the taste of beef! My husband, to whom I told the fact, found nothing surprising in it. Our peasants scarcely

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ever eat any meat but salt pig, and that not even Irish bacon, but American bacon of very poor quality and very cheap. This is their only meat. They may have a little mutton on a rare holiday. In England or Scotland they live mostly on oatmeal and bread and cheese and thin beer. They have to economise on their food to be able to help the families waiting along Killery Bay and on the shore of Clew Bay for what they can send them.

Phil paid us other visits. Whenever he came back from Scotland, he stopped for a chat at Mallow Cottage if we were at home, and he was always welcome. Sometimes he wrote letters, the length of which was somewhat great, but full of original flavour and quaint sayings as well as proving that the old jail-bird of Galway did not forget his friends.

One day he was very sad when he came. He was not standing as upright as usual. What had happened?

He had accompanied his eldest daughter, who was going to America, as far as Castlebar.

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She was very plucky, but his heart was heavy to see her start, so young, so fragile! The struggler, who would bravely have held his own against the enemy if a fight in the field were possible, turned aside his head to hide his tears. If the girleen were to fall ill while away!

By a strange turn of human affairs, the son of the landlord who evicted the men of Letterass and of many another village, has found that there is little profit after all in hunting away a working population. A year ago he offered to sell his property to the Congested District Board. The Board buys land and sells it again to the tenants, dividing back the land taken long ago from the people, among the families of the victims. The sons of those tenants, who were formerly evicted, are among those who have the first claim to the land. The village of the Letterass is thus to be peopled again, and our friend Phil has a right to his share. When the news of Lord Lucan's sale was published in the papers, Phil wrote to my husband to congratulate him on this new

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triumph of the United Irish League, and he came to see us on his way from Scotland. He had become much older since we last saw him. The hard work in the foundry was almost too much for him. He sat down in order to talk at his ease—he who could have stood for days and never felt tired. He spoke with enthusiasm of the sale of Lord Lucan's property, but the idea that he himself could derive profit from the sale did not seem to strike him. My husband told him how to put forward his claim.

The Congested Districts' Board is slow in its operations. The sale was announced in 1902 and now, in 1903 nothing has been done,[1] but any day the Board may set to work and Phil on his return to the village should write, or ask his priest to write for him, to the Secretary of

[1] We are in 1904 and nothing has been done. It is pathetic to hear the poor tenants starving among the rocks or on the bogs, and the landless poor men, who are hoping to get farms once the Lucan Estate is broken up by the Board, wondering when their fate will be decided. Many mothers told me that, if there was a chance of having a farm, their sons, slaving away in England or America, would gladly come home.

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the Board, stating his claim. He stopped the explanation my husband was giving to tell him of some reminiscence of the old days which had just occurred to him. The past was more present to him than this every-day world, and after struggling for more than fifty years to maintain his right to a corner of the lands of Letterass, which were to be given back to the population so cruelly evicted, it seemed as if his brain was unable to realise what the new hope meant. He told us he had felt so weak over in Scotland he would have liked to have had one of his sons with him, and he was thinking of taking one with him next year. His daughter had been ill in America. She wrote to him from the hospital and her letter was very sad. She said that instead of sending him anything, she was obliged to ask him for a little help. "I sent her ten shillings. I would have sent her more other years, but now I earn less; they only give me lighter jobs which are poorly paid."

"Well," I said, "now, when you have

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your farm of Letterass, your sons will work for you, your daughter will come back from America and get strong at home. You will have a happy old age."

But he had become too deaf to hear me, or he was too ill to have the heart to rejoice. I missed the smile that would have lighted up his fine old face another time.

He told me he would spend the night in the neighbourhood as he was too tired to go back to Leenane without stopping.

Will poor Phil die without seeing the wished for return of his family to the paternal nest?

Vanity of human wishes! We touch with our hands what we have been struggling for, and we have not the strength to grasp it and enjoy it!

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CHAPTER IX

ABOUT HATS AND COATS

WE have tramps in Ireland, who go from town to town like the *chemineaux* of France. Some beg on the way, others look for work; they all find a shelter and a meal in the poorest huts, for there is no harm in them. Some take a liking for this wandering life and become incapable of regular work; others spend in drink the small sums they receive from the charitable, but no tramp inspires terror in the people among whom he goes, and we have no such crimes to bewail here as made the name of *chemineaux* sound so horrible in France.

When we arrived at Mallow Cottage my wish was to give work, as far as was possible, to any one who was skilled in a trade, and if anyone offered to do a job for me, I tried to

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imagine that I was in need of some work of the kind.

One day an intelligent looking man came to the door, holding a black bag. He asked me if I had any felt hats that required renewing. "You won't know them again!" he told me. "They will look as if they came out of the shop."

It was very tempting! I had under my hand three masculine hats that were greatly in need of being improved.

My hat-mender settled down to work and I rejoiced at the good fortune that had brought him.

Some time before our old friend, the Archbishop of Cashel, the great churchman and the noble-hearted patriot, had spent a few days with us. Like all great men he had small fads, very innocent ones, and they only made one love him more, if it were possible.

One day we were driving in a landau, and to protect us from the wind one half of the carriage was open and the other half was closed. It began to rain. The archbishop took off

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his hat and put it under shelter, remaining bare-headed in the rain. He would neither allow an umbrella to be held over his head nor the carriage to be closed, nor would he sit on the seat where he had put his hat. "My hat deserves that I should take care of it," he told me, smiling, "it has done good service. I have had it now for more than ten years." I expressed my surprise that such a very elderly hat could look so well and he explained that each year he sent the hat to a shop where it was renewed. "But it must not remain in the rain," he added. "As to me, the rain does me no harm. I like it!"

The shower over he put on his hat. The recollection of this episcopal hat, gifted with eternal youth, made me hope that the man who had come to me might give our felt hats as good an appearance.

I read the other day in the life of the patriotic bishop of Metz, that Mgr. Dupont des Loges had a hat much older than Dr. Croke's. The biographer relates that the French bishop kept the same hat for forty years, and that in

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the end he wore it in the garden, not daring to appear in public with such a quaint headgear.

My man finished his work, enjoyed his dinner and parted from me so well satisfied with his morning's experience, that he made me a present of a wonderful mixture, which would remove every stain, only he warned me not to put the liquid near the fire, it would explode! He also explained to me that I must leave the hats to dry for an hour, "only be careful not to put them near the fire! In an hour you won't know them."

We parted very good friends.

My husband came to lunch and I told him what good use I made of my morning and that he would have three new hats as grand as the archbishop's famous hat.

When the time for going out came, my enthusiasm grew less. The hats were wet, all sticky and looking anything but a success. I regretted having been too rash. I ought to have kept one old hat safe. However, nothing could be done. One must not try and hasten the drying process by putting the hats near

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the fire. Luckily I found in a drawer an old travelling cap, which saved the situation. The next day, Saturday, the hats were not a bit better and again the travelling cap was most useful. But what man could go to Mass in Westport on a Sunday in a travelling cap? It would shock public opinion!

Early on Sunday morning I confess I went most anxiously to see the state of the hats. The felt was dry—it was somewhat stiff and I cannot say that the result was as successful as I had been led to believe. However, the hats could be used and I felt relieved of my anxiety.

But from that day I was less quick in trying experiments and I have often found it safer to give some trifle, rather than attempt any renovating process. I must say that the good people who call are easily satisfied. Those who come from Cork or Mallow however, insist on seeing the master and having a chat with him. As a rule they have only one wish—to go back to the south of Ireland. They find the West so poor!

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Under Croagh Patrick

I remember the expressive look of a tramp from Cork, when he was telling my husband how he had been struck by the poverty of the Mayo people. "They eat for their dinner small potatoes—so small that in the South we would give them to the pigs. And they have no milk," he added, with a tone of pity.

One day, I was not present at the interview, and I was therefore less ready to sympathise with the woes of the poor man, who had been telling my husband his sad story and asking him to give him a warm coat. We were in winter and he had a long way to go. My husband came to ask me where was the old overcoat he was not wearing and which would make this poor man comfortable. This did not suit me at all! That old coat had a history which made me cling to it, and I had not the heart to give it to an unknown stranger who might go and pawn it. I proposed to buy it back by giving the tramp a few shillings. The poor man was quite satisfied with my offer, and I was more than pleased to keep the old coat, which well de-

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served my affection. It was a historical coat.

Under the Coercion regime, the editor of *United Ireland* was prosecuted at Carrick-on-Suir before judges chosen by the Government to convict and punish as a crime any manifestation of freedom of speech or freedom of the press. Though the end of the trial was known beforehand, the lawyer of the accused made a desperate attempt to uphold the rights of his client. Both knew how little it would avail. The judges, not satisfied with having the sentence ready, would not even allow the lawyer time to speak. He rose and declared that if he was not at liberty to defend his friend and client as he thought fit, he would not remain in a court where justice was a mockery.

A scene of indescribable confusion followed; the lawyer and the accused walked out together. The policemen tried in vain to stop the accused; the crowd surrounded him and separated him from the policemen. When the tumult was over, lawyer and client had disappeared.

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The police made desperate efforts to find the accused, but without success. Neither in Carrick nor in Ireland nor in England could any trace be found of the fugitive.

Some days later a great meeting was to be held in Manchester to protest against the Coercion regime. The editor of *United Ireland* had promised to take part in it before he knew he would have to appear in Carrick, in presence of judges, who were not likely to leave him at liberty to attend the Manchester meeting. When he followed his lawyer out of the court it was without any plan, only with the intention of protesting against the pretence of justice of which the tribunal at Carrick was affording the sickening spectacle, and with the certainty that he would be arrested once he left the building. But when he found himself safe in a friend's house, the thought struck him that there was a chance of leaving Ireland and arriving in Manchester in time for the meeting. It was then he decided to make the attempt, never guessing he should be able to carry it out without difficulty.

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Having reached an Irish port and found a friendly captain, who was proud to take him on board and land him in Wales, the fugitive soon found himself in a small Welsh village where the Catholic priest, who was not an Irishman, was most hospitable and kept him until he left for London.

He reached London in the middle of the night and knocked at the door of an old friend and countrywoman. She was away but her servant welcomed him and did what her mistress would have done to make the traveller comfortable. Next day the friend was made acquainted with the state of affairs by a cautious telegram and she came back full of joy. She was despatched to the House of Commons to fetch an Irish Member, who set to work to get for the fugitive all that was necessary to travel in England without exciting suspicion. He had left his coat behind him in the court, as well as his collar and necktie—lost in the fray. He wore when escaping a heavy frieze coat, which a countryman had thrown over his shoulders, and his clothes had suffered

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from the journey by sea and land in all weathers. The purchases were made with great discrimination, and an overcoat, in the fashion of the day, gave the runaway the look of a worthy Englishman on his holiday, and who knows if it had not its own share in the success of the undertaking?

The Manchester meeting had begun. The hall was filled with an enthusiastic crowd. All at once the rumour spread that the man for whom the police of Ireland and England had been looking wildly, was in the hall—that he was on the platform!

One can imagine the enthusiasm with which the speech of that Irishman was received. The meeting over, the Liberals crowded around the orator, whose appearance had created an explosion of cheers. They could not be reconciled to the thought that once out of the hall the police would arrest and drag him back to Ireland, where he would suffer in prison for having raised his voice on Irish soil against a state of things, which could be denounced without danger on an English platform.

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I believe that among those wise Englishmen, there were some ardent spirits who were willing that evening to do some mad action, and it was the Irishman who brought them back into the region of common-sense. He had done what he wanted to do—kept his word and answered the invitation of the Liberals of Manchester, and there was no use in further resistance. As soon as he left the meeting, he was arrested, and an enthusiastic crowd followed him to the Mansion House, where the Mayor of Manchester treated the prisoner as an honoured guest. He even made him sleep in the room prepared for the Prince of Wales when he last stayed in Manchester.

In contrast to the scenes of enthusiasm which greeted the Irish orator in Manchester, was the description some days later in the papers of brutal scenes which took place within the walls of Clonmel Jail. This brutal treatment caused a thrill of horror all through Liberal England, and was influential in helping public opinion to decide against the

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Coercion régime which ended soon after in a humiliating defeat—a defeat which was the end of all Coercion governments, after they had caused untold sufferings, and kept alive the hatred between oppressed and oppressors.

The first time I saw the top-coat which had gone through the Manchester episode—it had faced many a storm and many a shower—I remember how tempted I felt to sew on a button which had fallen off and made it look untidy. I enjoyed that satisfaction many months later, and although I am not clever at my needle, I flatter myself that my care prolonged the existence of that coat beyond the ordinary time that men's coats survive the wear and tear of years. You can now understand why I preferred giving the tramp a few shillings and keeping this old relic of struggling days. As I am speaking of coats I must warn all new-comers to the country to beware of the friendship of cows.

Cows have curious tastes. For instance, when my husband was digging in the little garden, which had been left long uncultivated,

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and where he intended putting our narcissus, a cow used to come and keep him company whilst he was at work, and I found the attention of the brown cow with the dreamy eyes very touching. To dig at his ease the worker used to throw his waist-coat and coat on a bush. What was my dismay one day when I discovered that one side of the coat had been torn away—munched away—by the friendly cow!

I have since learned that cows have a taste for destroying clothes, which makes them to to be dreaded.

Laundresses who put the washing on the grass know it well, and they take good care to watch that no cow goes near the clothes. The careless laundress would soon find that collars or aprons had disappeared, and had been done away with by those gentle looking animals with the dreamy eyes.

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CHAPTFR X

THE YEAR OF DISTRESS

WE had one year of distress since we came to live in Mallow Cottage. God keep us from seeing another! The heart grows heavy at the recollection, and yet the distress was less terrible and less widespread than in the historic famines of which one reads the tragic tale.

About August, the rain began—persistent, deadly. It is the critical time for our harvests, which, as a rule, are late. The rain continued day after day; rumours of disaster began to be heard. The foliage of the potatoes died away instead of turning yellow and fading naturally. It became black within a few hours, as if scorched by fire, and it gave out a certain smell—a smell I had read about in

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descriptions of former bad years as a forerunner of the potato blight.

The grass was cut late, and in many places it had been impossible to save the hay, and it was sad to see it rotting in the rain. Other crops were bad all round. From different parts of the country rose a cry of alarm ; the winter was certain to be hard for the poor.

I remember about the end of September came the first groups of peasants—some from a great distance, some walking, some riding from the far West to ask my husband what was to be done, and to explain to the Board of Guardians of Westport their destitute condition.

One day we saw a number of tenants on the road. They had come to see their landlord and to ask him to grant a reduction of rent, owing to the bad year. They were told he was out. However, they waited at his gate in the rain, hoping he would come back in time to see them, for they lived a long distance away among the mountains, and it would be hard to return unsuccessful. They did not

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see him that day, and it was understood that he was sitting comfortably by the fire while the poor people were standing in the rain at his gate those dreary hours.

I saw that winter one effect of hunger which has remained in my recollection like a terrible nightmare. I saw men stagger as if they were drunk, because they had eaten nothing all day, and had walked a long distance to look for work.

That year our farming operations must have appeared very wild to practical people, but we were only too happy to help by giving work, without fear of hurting the men who were in sore need.

I saw men hold on by a bannister to steady themselves, they were so weak, and yet they came to ask—not for alms—but work that would enable them to buy Indian meal for their children. I remember in particular one man, whose face was fearfully haggard. His name was O'Donnell, the father of eight young children. He had tramped five miles from the miserable mountain village of Boulavreen to

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beg for a few days' work. A man naturally of Herculean size and strength, yet he had, while speaking to my husband, to lean against the door-post, lest he should fall from sheer, unmistakable exhaustion and starvation. Only that he received a day's wages in advance to buy food, I am satisfied he would not have been able to drag himself to work. And there were nine at home in the mountain cabin as hungry as he!

I came into contact, at that time, with men from far-off villages, of which I only knew the names, they were out of the ordinary range of communication. Men from Kilsalla, Falduff, Boulavreen, Bohaun, who came to ask for work, and had to walk miles to and fro. I have not seen them since that time.

How many sorrowful tales I heard in those days! What a pitiable number of mothers, of daughters, of husbands—all with hunger written on their sad faces—came to tell of their distress! One had only to look at the speakers to know how genuine that distress

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was, and how little individual help could do to relieve such widespread misery; it was like a drop of water in an ocean of suffering.

The Government did nothing to mitigate the pangs of famine. First of all, there were official denials that there was any distress at all, then when the facts spoke too loud, and when it was impossible to deny the truth, the Government proposed a plan of relief which sounded like a mockery. The very men who were starving were to pay part of the relief works. Men like O'Donnell of Boulavreen, who were paying the full rates for their poor holdings, would have "to pay as ratepayers 25 per cent. of the cost of their own relief, besides in some cases, being obliged to pay as a Union at large charge for the relief of their starving neighbours in still poorer electoral divisions."

And the knowledge that the suffering we saw around us was only part of more widespread destitution in the surrounding coast parishes—not to speak of Galway, Clare, Kerry and West Cork—gave one a feeling of heart-sickness and despair. I never felt so

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depressed as I did that winter when we left Mallow Cottage. We were going to London, and we stopped in Holyhead to spend Sunday. At Mass, in the little Catholic Church, the population was very poor—Irish of course, and the priest was Irish. He spoke of the distress in Ireland; and asked those who listened to him to give out of their poverty to help poorer people than themselves. Every one gave.

My husband described this touching scene in a letter to the "Freeman's Journal" (*A National Duty*, *Feb.* 13, 1898) and he made an appeal to Irish charity for an Irish disaster.

The answer, as usual, was most prompt and consoling. A fund was started under the auspices of the Lord Mayor of Dublin, and, once the national spirit was aroused, emulation urged on the charitable.

The money subscribed amounted to a large sum. The impulse being given, there was no fear that the poor women and children would be left to starve. Many kind people sent seeds for the new harvest, and this was a most

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welcome gift. As the spring came on, one of the terrors of the poor people was that they would have no means of putting down their crops.

In the distribution, Westport, Newport and the surrounding villages were not forgotten, and as the spring came on, it was pleasant to see everyone working with great energy in the fields. How gratefully the gifts of potato seeds or oats were received! It was new life after the horrors of despair, and now every one was saying that this year the potatoes must be sprayed. Indeed people passed from an utter disbelief in spraying to an exaggeration of the value of the process, and there was great anxiety how to get the machines which in those days were considered necessary for carrying it out. The machines were dear, and no tenant could afford to buy one.

An old lady very generously sent £50 to my husband, with a letter asking him to use that money in the best way to insure permanent benefit to the parish of Westport. It seemed to him that the "best way" was to

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buy spraying machines and divide them among the different hamlets. All through Ireland the rush for these machines was so great that orders had to be given early, and we were quite surprised to find how hard it was to get them in time. However, we succeeded in getting them and the joy of the poor people was great.

All the men who were in the habit of going every year to work in England or Scotland, went earlier than usual to earn money for their family; besides a number of men too young or too old to go under ordinary circumstances, were anxious to go to England that year, and they came to ask my husband what part of England he would advise them to go to.

Kindly-hearted Englishmen, touched by the distress in Ireland, had been writing to my husband and offering to get work in the fields for any men we should send, and money was given us to provide for their travelling expenses.

We decided to send ten men at a time, and the first departure caused us a good deal of

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anxiety. We sent word to the poorest we knew, that if they wished to go to England, we were ready to give them a chance.

We chose the first ten men who were to start together. Professor Long had kindly sent us the names of the English farmers ready to give work, as well as the itinerary to be followed. It was complicated for people who had never travelled, for they were obliged to go through London, from one station to another.

Among the first men who came were two in whom I took a special interest. One was a very young boy who had worked for us from time to time. His mother was a widow, a very poor woman, with five children, and she found it very hard to get on. Paddie came to tell me he would like to go but he was afraid of his mother's grief. I sent for her and I tried to show her it was better to let Paddie start. He would come back in a few months, and his earnings in England would help her and the children. She agreed with me but nevertheless began to cry. Paddie was the

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son she loved best. It it always the son or daughter who is going away to whom the mother clings most. At last she gave her consent to Paddie's going.

The other candidate was a married man, middle-aged, and a splendid worker. We gave him a week's work from time to time, but it was a small help to keep alive his wife and children. Martin would earn far more in England. He came to talk with my husband, and told him he was very anxious to go, but his wife would not hear of it. She had been ill and was not very strong; he dared not grieve her. After a great deal of discussion he gave up the notion and the first list of ten was made up without Martin.

The day the men left they were to meet in our kitchen early for a hurried breakfast, and our gardener was to go with them to the station to see them off.

We had distributed several copies of the itinerary, and all the details of the journey had been carefully written down. The Railway Company gave, as it does every year, cheap

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tickets to harvest men from Westport to Chester, but at Chester they had to get tickets for London. In London they had to go to another station and there take new tickets to the village where they were to work. It was confusing and with the exception of one man, who had been to America, none had ever before left his village. It is easier to go from Ireland to America than to find one's way through the complications of an English time-table, once one gets off the main lines.

The morning of the departure one of the men sent word he was prevented from starting. I was told his wife, at the last moment, would not let him go, and Martin took his place. I asked how Martin brought round his wife to consent to his going away, and the answer was that he left her without saying a word. If he had told her what he intended to do, she would have cried and then he would not have had the heart to leave her.

Our travellers were to reach Dublin at three o'clock and spend some hours there before getting on board at the North Wall. From

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Westport to Dublin, it was easy work, for there was no change. We asked one of our friends to take charge of our ten men at Broadstone till it was time for them to go on board.

A telegram from Dublin made us anxious. Our friend wired that he did not see our harvest men at the terminus. He wrote that, not having met them there, he went to the boat at the hour of its departure and yet did not see our harvest men. What had happened? Had the men got out at the wrong station? We had only been able to take tickets as far as Chester, and we had to give them money to pay their fare from there to the English village where they were to work. Had they got drunk on that money?

I was told that Martin's wife did nothing but cry from the time he left, and that Paddie's mother was even more violent in her grief. I sent word that I would go to see them as soon as I had news. Luckily I did not mention when I expected to hear. For three days I was too anxious myself to face the eyes of the wife or the mother. We

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were worrying as to what had happened but at last came the happy annoucement that they were safely arrived. I hurried to see my two poor women, and sent word to the other families that the travellers had reached their destination all right.

How could ten harvest men coming from Westport escape our friend's eyes at Broadstone and at the North Wall?

The explanation was that he expected to see ragged men, with the traditional red handkerchief, holding their tiny luggage, hanging from the end of a stick on the shoulders. But our men had on their neat Sunday clothes and had linen bags for their belongings. One even, the man who had been in America, had the luxury of a tin trunk, and two men carried musical instruments. They were taken to be comfortably off and not harvest men from poor Mayo. The mistake caused us three days of keen anxiety.

The other departures were much easier and very successful. Our men turned out well, and since then most of them go back every

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year to work for the same farmer; but now they go on their own account.

The number of those who wished to go was increasing out of proportion to the offers of work we had, and the candidates were very young. We were puzzled to know what was to be done to find work for all. Luckily, one day, when a few young men were begging to be sent to England, and we had nowhere to send them to, their fathers arrived on the scene, and asked us not to send them away. They wanted them to work at home. It was a great relief to be able to gratify the father's wishes. And thus ended our agency.

In ordinary years this all goes on of itself, and we have not anything to do, beyond sometimes giving one or two weeks' work to help the poorest men to pay their travelling expenses.

Two of the first men we sent to England have no need to cause any more grief to their mother or their wife by going away, for Paddie has found a place in the neighbourhood and Martin replaced one of our own men who left

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us. When Martin heard we were going to give him permanent employment, his joy was so great that all he could say was eloquent in its brevity. "I am shocking grateful," he said.

In those days Martin was a man of few words; he worked hard and spoke little. He had gone through years of extreme poverty, and his mind was bent on the almost impossible problem of keeping the wife and children alive on the meagre means at his disposal. It seemed as if he had no energy left to think of anything else. Sometimes he used phrases most expressive in their quaint simplicity. For instance, once he was excusing himself for having done unknowingly something that displeased the master.

"I was as green as the ass in the field," he said. The certainty of a weekly salary made Martin a comfortable man. After a time one could notice that ease of mind was working a beneficial influence, for Martin lost the pitiable look of a half-starved man. He took courage and began to think, or at least he found words to express his thoughts. One day, during the

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South African war, I was amazed to hear him begin to discuss with the master its effects on the prices of flour and cattle.

Martin soon turned his mind to make his home more comfortable, and one day when there was a cheap sale of furniture in Westport, he asked leave to go; he wanted to buy chairs. On Sundays Martin now looks so neatly dressed that it does one good to see him. As to his wife, who would ever have recognised the poor woman who used to sob night and day, in the comely woman, with a smiling round face, I met recently on the road, wrapped in a warm shawl, and holding the hand of her little son, a well-dressed little lad, whose rosy cheeks prove there is no necessity now-a-days to stint the supply of food.

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CHAPTER XI

HONOR

WE were new-comers at Mallow Cottage, and one spring, our potato crop down, we had some seed left over. We asked one of the Westport priests to tell us the poorest families to whom he would advise us to give the seed. He had not been long in the parish and he took counsel of an old lady who knew every man, woman and child in the neighbourhood for many a mile around.

"Put on your list, first of all, the name of Honor of Killinakof—Honor is the decentest and poorest woman I know."

Father McDermot sent for Honor and offered to supply her with a note, asking our gardener to give her seed potato for her field.

Honor answered "I have only one son,

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Father, there are poorer people than I. Give the seeds to families where there are many children."

Any one who knew Honor's poverty would have seen something heroic in her refusal. She was a widow with an only son, whom she adored. She worked very hard to bring up this beloved son. He was at the time a tall, thin lad, with curly black hair.

Honor had a little farm, divided up in twenty tiny patches, in a village perched on the hill, and in the midst of the rocks. Her hut was so small and primitive that when I first knew her, her ambition was to gain enough money to put in a window in the only room, which, with a diminutive kitchen, made up the home of the mother and son.

She worked as a charwoman by day, and the ladies of the neighbourhood knew that when Honor came she did as much work as three other women, and took as much pains whether one left her to herself or watched every one of her movements. They knew also that they might trust her with the treasures of the

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earth and that she would have died rather than cast an eye of envy on any of them.

I sent for Honor to help in the kitchen, and one year, when they were busy with the hay, I told her we wanted her son to work in our fields for some days. The mother's face beamed. She was a tall, thin woman, with a refined, intellectual face; she was clever, and liked to read; one could give her no greater treat, when her day's work was done and she was returning to her mountain home, than to give her a newspaper. Her country's cause interested her greatly, and that she was a good patriot, one fact will suffice to show. At the time when Gladstone proposed the Home Rule Bill, Irish Conservatives sent monster petitions against Home Rule. In those petitions, one read Irish names—names of people who are Nationalists by a natural law, as constant as the law which makes fish swim or birds fly—the signatures had been given under pressure of terror. One of the ladies for whom Honor worked told her she was to sign one of those petitions, and gave

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her the order under the conviction that the poor woman would not dare to refuse. Honor drew herself up to her full height and declared that she would never sign anything contrary to her conscience, contrary to the interest of her country. She expected that she would never be asked to return to the house; and was wondering by what new economy she would re-construct the equilibrium of her budget, as this lady was one of her best clients. But luckily for Honor no other woman worked as hard or as well as she herself, and she did not lose the day a week, which was a most precious help to her.

With the first money earned by Anthony, Honor bought the window she had been dreaming of. She put a curtain to it and this improvement caused her a more intense satisfaction than a millionaire would feel entering for the first time the palace he had built for himself.

One day, by chance, we found ourselves in the neighbourhood of Killinakoff and we paid Honor a visit. The little home was delight-

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fully neat—she did the honours of it with perfect dignity, and then took us a little distance from her hut to a spot where the view was lovely. She had—what is rare among our peasants—the sense of the picturesque, and she realised the beauty of the landscape. And certainly from the place where she took us, the view was exquisite.

As a rule, peasants accustomed to see a beautiful country from their childhood, do not understand how strangers can admire what is so familiar to them. If they leave their native land—distance, reflection, comparison with other countries, home-sickness, make them crave for the beauty of their mountains—the views opening on the sea—the wide horizons with the ever-changing clouds and beautiful mists. But as a rule, it is only from afar that one realises how lovely the landscape is which stretches at the foot of Croagh Patrick, along Clew Bay, of the hundred lovely isles.

I remember the surprised look of a peasant friend of mine who lived in a hamlet no less picturesque than Killinakoff—and no less

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poor—when she told me she often saw us walk past her cottage, and I answered that it was one of our favourite walks, it was such a beautiful place!

She began to laugh. "You call that beautiful—rocks, and nothing but rocks. I would like to live in a plain where grass grows around. Many a time, God forgive me, I have cursed our rocks! We find it so hard to draw our harvest from the hard soil."

I agreed with her that if I had to get as as much as would feed me, to grow on the rocks, I would be less tempted to admire their wild beauty.

Luke, our gardener, was, as a rule, hard to please with those who worked under him, but he spoke to me with praise of Anthony. He worked well and talked little. I told Luke to get the young lad whenever he had work light enough for him.

"He works better than many a man," was the grumbling answer. I spoke with the master, and he gave his consent to our adding Anthony to our staff.

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That day, I do believe, Honor felt herself happier than any other woman in the world. The anxiety which tortured her mind for years was lest when Anthony grew to be a man he would have to go and work in England. She dreaded seeing him go away for six months every year. She would have killed herself with work to earn enough for two if that would keep him at home. Now Anthony would remain with her and be at his ease. With what a proud and happy air she brought him his dinner every day and remained by his side whilst he was eating it. Then she returned to her hamlet on the hill, for she was so discreet that she would never come to our kitchen for a chat, unless I sent for her.

Whenever we had visitors she came to help. She dined in the kitchen on those occasions. One Sunday she was assisting us, and it struck me that Anthony must spend a dull Sunday alone on the hill, so I told Honor that she must bring her son to dine with her whenever we wanted her on a Sunday.

She laughed. "Anthony is far too shy to

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come and dine with the girls," she said. In those days I had an elderly cook and a very young girl, and the idea that old Lizzie or little Mary could make anyone shy made me laugh too.

My husband, when I told him the curious refusal of Honor, said—"With such a timid young man, when he falls in love, it will be a serious matter!"

Anthony in love! I could not think of it without smiling! In any case Mary was too young and Lizzie too old—he would have to look elsewhere.

Mary was the daughter of Burke, our Murrisk fisherman. She used to come sometimes to sell some of the fish her father caught. She was a very shy girl, who appeared and disappeared without saying an unnecessary word, and she answered questions in the briefest monosyllables. When I had to replace Maggie, the pretty girl, who was too fond of balls, and pretended she was afraid of ghosts, I was quite surprised to hear our cook propose to me to take Mary.

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"She knows nothing," I said.

"She will learn. She is a good worker—she works in the field and she cuts the turf. She is the daughter of good honest people."

I was quite willing to try, but afraid Mary would not suit. She was so shy I thought her stupid—it was a great mistake.

Before coming to us Mary went bare-footed. She was quite proud the first time she put on boots, but she had to pay for that satisfaction. The boots were heavy and Mary's footstep sounded on the stairs very like Hofer's heavy paw. Her feet were not accustomed to be imprisoned, and many a time I found Mary running about the kitchen without shoes or stockings to ease her feet and do her work more comfortably.

I have often wondered why I met young girls on the roads, holding their boots in their hands. It is because boots are a torture and yet a source of pride at the same time. The girls put on their boots before entering the town to go to church. They take them off to walk home at their ease.

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Mary came to Mallow Cottage a few days before we returned. The first evening we spent at home we remained up longer than usual in the drawing-room. Mary slept in a little room underneath. She had gone to bed early and rose trembling. She ran to the cook, who asked her what was wrong.

"There are ghosts in the house," panted Mary. "I have heard them!"

She had heard our voices and it took a long time before she was soothed sufficiently to realise that we were no ghosts.

I was mistaken. Mary was by no means stupid. She grew accustomed in a very short time to her new surroundings, and she turned out a very hard worker—in fact she did not know what it meant to feel tired.

Very soon after she had come to us, Hofer arrived from the south of Ireland. At first Mary had the charge of him and used to give him his food. She had a great influence over him. One day Hofer ran after a hen and the poor bird nearly died of fright. I told Mary she must punish Hofer and beat him on such

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occasions. She took a stick and Hofer submitted to the punishment with perfect good temper. He could have broken the stick to bits and thrown down the girl if he had been so minded, but he let her do as she wished and bore her no ill-will. He looked on Mary as belonging to him, and if she noticed a child, brought by the mother to the kitchen, Hofer was very much tried. If she took the child in her arms Hofer began to howl and only stopped when Mary gave up the baby to somebody else. Then he would come and give her his paw or put his head on her lap and make peace with his little friend.

As time went on the idea came to me that in five or six years Mary and Anthony would make a fine couple. What was my astonishment when we were away from home, to receive from my old cook a letter beginning: "You will be surprised to hear that Anthony and Mary are married. I only heard of it the day before. Honor also knew nothing about it, and she is angry with her son. Mary will remain here until your return."

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My idyll began badly. When I came home I asked the cook if she had guessed nothing of what was going on. When did the lovers meet?

"No, I had no suspicion. Only I found that Mary took very long feeding the hens, and I used to scold her, never dreaming that was the time Anthony came to chat with her."

I sent for Honor. Anthony only spoke to her of his marriage the day before it took place. That was what had grieved her most. And each time she met Anthony's wife, the wife began to cry. "Do I look like a woman who would wish to make my son's wife cry?" she asked me.

I tried to soothe her as well as I could, and I promised that next time Mary met her there would be no tears. I spoke to Mary. She promised not to cry any more; and as she was speaking her good, honest eyes filled with tears. I told her that she and Anthony had been wrong in keeping their engagement a secret from Honor, that it was natural she should feel sore, and the best way to make her

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forget was to be a good little woman, cheerful and gentle with Honor. Then I was sure Honor would do her best to meet her half way I ended my sermon by saying that if Honor and Mary lived in peace for six months a pretty cow would come and ask Mary to milk her, and that Anthony had better begin to build a stable for the cow at his leisure.

Next time Honor came to see me, I felt that peace was proclaimed. She told me she had made a present to her son of a new suit of clothes, and had ordered the suit herself, cautioning the tailor to take great pains to fit Anthony, now he was a married man. Honor had forgiven the young couple and the cow came and took possession of her stable.

In the little house there was not much room to spare. It was like living in the cabin of a ship, and there was the same cleanliness one enjoys on board. However, all three were happy. Each of the women did her best to make the other comfortable, and when Honor held in her arms her first grand-daughter, she felt a more tender love in her heart for the

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little creature than even her love for Anthony.

The little girl was called Honor, and this touched the grandmother. Anthony was very shy on the subject when he was congratulated. All he could say was that the baby was very, very small. He had never had a brother nor a sister and had never seen a new-born baby. I fancy he imagined babies were born big!

Some years of peaceful happiness went by. Mary had not much time to come and see me. She had three daughters, and as a rule it was Honor who came and brought Anthony his dinner. I fancy that often Mary might have made time to come, but she sent the old woman in her place to please her. It made Honor feel younger to sit by Anthony's side and watch him whilst he ate his dinner.

The small cabin was replaced by a larger and more comfortable house. Mary had been able to save a little money, and Honor gave the sum she had put aside since life became easier. "It was the money I kept for my funeral," she told me, "but the children were too much cramped for room. It was better to

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give them my money to help them to get a larger house."

The hut with the one window became the home of the cow and the calf, and two pigs settled down in the old stable.

Alas! a cloud came over all this happiness. Honor fell ill. The doctor went to see her and found out that she had been suffering without saying anything for a long time, and that an operation was necessary. It was the only way to save her life, or at least to prolong it for some years.

The doctor advised her to go to Dublin to be operated in an hospital. Honor said she was ready to go. She had never left Westport, but she did not show any fear of the journey to Dublin, nor of what awaited her at the end of it. One thing made her feel anxious. Would Mary know how to take proper care of her three daughters when the grandmother was away. "It is not that I have any complaint to make of Mary," added the old woman. "Mary is a good creature. She wanted to give me her best skirt for the journey. I

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refused. It would be silly to wear a Sunday skirt to go to a hospital."

Something in Honor's voice as she said this made me feel that she was thinking, if she died in Dublin, it would be a pity to deprive Mary of her best skirt.

"You will see," I said, "all will go well!"

"I am easy in my mind," she replied. "I went yesterday to the chapel and I was in luck. It was one of the missionaries who heard my confession, and this morning I went to the altar rails in Westport."

"How!" I exclaimed, a little vexed, "you walked fasting this morning from Killinakoff to Westport? You ought not to have done it!"

"It did me no harm," she replied, with a smile.

And next morning when Anthony went with her to the station it was with a smile that she said good-bye to him, but he, poor man, came back crying and we thought the better of him for those tears.

The Reverend Mother of Jervis Street

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Hospital (the hospital is in charge of the Sisters of Mercy) wrote to me that the operation succeeded very well, and that the patient had shown wonderful pluck. She had won the heart of the surgeon, who admired the calm courage of this poor peasant. She came back after a few weeks, somewhat paler, something thinner, but so happy to see us, and to find that all had gone well at home whilst she was away.

She was full of gratitude for all the kindness she had met with in the hospital, and was never done describing how good every one had been to her—reverend mother, the nun in charge of the ward, the nurses and the surgeon. Indeed she had good reason to be grateful. Jervis Street is one of those institutions Dublin can be proud of, and I have never been within its walls without feeling happier. The patients are so well taken care of and all is made so easy for them. I never know what to admire more: the great brain of the woman who carries on this great work, or her large heart open to all human suffering.

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Indeed Dublin hospitals are among the sources of pride to Dublin people. The Sisters of Charity have under their care St. Vincent's Hospital, where patients are as well looked after as in Jervis Street, and I, for one could be well satisfied with a bed in either of these hospitals—a bed such as non-paying patients get. As to those who can pay, they find a home in Leeson Street, where every luxury and comfort awaits them. I have heard people who were ill in rich American cities and had gone to private hospitals there, saying that many a time they wished themselves in the comfortable home of the Sisters of Charity in Leeson Street. Dublin can also boast of an institution unique in the world, under the care of the Sisters of Charity—the Hospice for the Dying.

With all its wealth, with all its treasures, London does not possess such a Hospice, and it would be well inspired to follow the Irish model and to borrow some of the Irish Sisters, already working among its poor, to carry on the work. But there is one nun the Dublin

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poor will never allow to depart, and she is English—indeed she is the only Englishwoman who ever conquered Ireland. She has conquered Irish hearts, and there would be a revolt in Dublin if she were to give up her work there among the poor.

I remember my first visit to the Hospice when I came to Ireland, and when all I saw filled me with the delightful sensation of being more attractive than I expected. Of all the delights of that time none has remained brighter in my recollection than my first glimpse of the Hospice for the Dying, and the surprise of finding so much to attract and please, where one was afraid to meet with nothing but pain and sorrow. The nuns have found a magical spell to make dying people so happy that, seeing all those bright and cheerful and peaceful faces, the sense of rest steals over the visitor. I remember what a Russian lady—surrounded in her home with all the comfort that luxury can bring—said, after going through the Hospice, "It would be good to be ill here." Aye, it would be good to be ill

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and to die there and good too to live, if one could live as those nuns are living, giving their life to God and to God's poor, and making us, poor worldlings, feel the better for seeing what lives of cheerful self sacrifice and holiness can be led in our day, even in the midst of the selfishness of modern life.

Honor had some happy years after her return from Dublin. Only she was getting old, so she seldom came to see us; the walk tired her. But whenever I saw her she was quite cheerful, and her face beamed when she began to talk about her grand-daughters. Her one wish in this life was to see a grandson—a son of Anthony's.

However, one day the cruel disease woke up again. This time it attacked her internally, and there was no hope. Nothing could be done to save her. She bore those months of cruel agony with wonderful patience.

One day our doctor came to tell me the end was near and that he had told Anthony to send a priest to his mother. The doctor had barely finished speaking to me when a messenger

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came for him; Anthony had fallen from the car and broken his leg. He was lying on the road helpless. The doctor hurried to him, bandaged the leg and had him taken to the hospital, for one could not think of taking him home. His mother required every attention.

"If Honor learns that her son is in the hospital," said Maurice, our kind-hearted gardener, "it will kill her on the spot. We must save her that anxiety. Let me manage it."

He told the poor woman that we kept Anthony at Mallow Cottage for the night. We had done it sometimes in case of sickness and Honor did not feel anxious.

Next day Maurice told her that the master and mistress had gone away suddenly to Achill and that Anthony had gone with us for he was driving us. He was very much grieved not to have had time to go and say good-bye, but we started so early that he could not possibly manage it.

Once the poor man began in this way he had to go on. To explain the prolonged

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absence of Anthony he invented a fantastic trip of ours through Connemara—we were at Leenane, at Salruck, at Recess, at Cong,—I don't know where he did not send us!

I wonder did Honor find her son's masters very cruel to carry him off at such a time. She never uttered a word of complaint. All her strength of will was centred on one single aim: to keep alive until Anthony's return.

"Should he remain away seven years," she said one day, "he will find me on his return."

The doctor was a powerless witness to this desperate struggle. Poor Mary knew the truth, yet had to hide her anxiety about her husband and pretend to believe in his wanderings.

Honor could not bear any one near her except Mary, and Mary nursed her day and night with a daughter's devotion. And yet the poor wife found it hard to stand on her feet; she was near her confinement, and to the weariness of nursing—for days at a time she had not taken off her clothes—was added her anxiety about her husband. She had not

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even the consolation of going to see him in the hospital, where the poor man was breaking his heart at being away from his mother's side at such a time.

I grew anxious that this excess of fatigue would hurt Mary, so I sent word to Mary's mother to leave Murrisk and settle down with her daughter, to help her to nurse Honor. As soon as Honor saw Mrs. Burke, she thanked her for coming so far to see her—she was sure, she was greatly missed in Murrisk and begged of her to return.

The poor woman was afraid to remain when she had got such a hint that her presence was not welcome. But her second daughter came to help Mary. However, she ran away next day and Mary remained alone. The only one whose visits gave Honor pleasure was Maurice. He went morning and evening to see the dying woman and cheer her up, and many a time he spent the night by her side to help Mary to lift her. He always had a cheerful word, and both patient and nurse welcomed his visits.

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We would have wished to go and see Honor, but how could we explain our return and Anthony's absence? And thus we had to give up seeing her.

One night Mary had to go to bed, and next morning a neighbour brought to Honor the new-born baby—a boy! The dying woman held Anthony's son in her arms and blessed him. This was the last happiness she had in this world, before her eyes closed to the pains and the joys of life.

Anthony learned at the same time the death of his mother and the birth of his boy. Absorbed in filial grief, he was incapable of feeling any joy at the birth of this son who had been so longed for. His grief was lasting and deep and when he left the hospital and limped on his two sticks to pay us his first visit, it was the shadow of the Anthony whom we saw a few weeks before. Those weeks had been weeks of mental agony, harder to bear than the physical pain his mother had endured with so much courage.

Months passed. Mary regained her health,

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though she was ill for a long time after Honor's death. Anthony in time gave up his crutches, and now he walks as well as ever.

Last time I saw Mary she had on her Sunday dress. She was trotting so quickly along the road that I took her at first for a young stranger and was going to pass her. She presented the pleasant picture of a young peasant woman, happy and good. We had a chat and I asked her how were the children.

"All are well," she replied, "but my mother has taken Honor to Murrisk. She says that the sea air is good for the child and that there is a better school in Murrisk, and that Honor has everything to gain by remaining. Her father went to fetch his little daughter the other day, and what did the little rogue do? She hid under the table and my mother was of the same mind as the child so Anthony had to return alone."

Mary laughed as she related the misdeed of her daughter—the same young and hearty laugh I loved to hear long ago, when she was

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telling in the kitchen at night some trick Hofer had played her.

Life is so full of sorrow and anxiety, of worry and bitterness, that the sight of a happy woman, who deserves her happiness, rests the soul and gives us patience.

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CHAPTER XII

AN IRISH CRANFORD

ONE of Mrs. Gaskell's novels, read in early youth, has left me a delightful recollection. It is the description of life in a peaceful English village. The description is so life-like, that it seems to me as if I had lived for months in Cranford, by the side of the kindly and gentle women whom Mrs. Gaskell teaches one to love.

I found myself in the atmosphere of Cranford the first time I paid a visit to our neighbours of Cherry Cottage. They were two sisters, two old maids like the heroines of Mrs. Gaskell, and like those heroines of Cranford, two women full of sweetness and gentleness; one had at their side a sense of calm and peace of mind, such as one enjoys rarely in our century of restless rush and hurry.

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Under Croagh Patrick

Miss Mary and Miss Martha were well known in Westport and in all the neighbourhood. Their picturesque cottage had tempted me when we were searching in vain for a house near Clew Bay, where to spend a few months, but the ladies never left home, and that was the answer they gave in a kind note replying to my application for taking their cottage.

When we settled down at Mallow Cottage, those ladies were our nearest neighbours. We soon became acquainted. They were born in Mallow, which is also my husband's native town. This was a first bond. They belonged to a family of Protestant landowners. The grandfather in his will had disinherited his son or any of his descendants who would cease to be a Protestant. His son married a Catholic wife and became a Catholic. He lost his property. It passed into the hands of distant relations. He died young. His widow with her four children—two sons and two daughters—came to live in Connemara, where she had relations. The widow spent sad and anxious years; it was a hard task to bring up

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the children with scanty means. The youngest boy, Bernard, had no taste for study; when he was thirteen, he started for America. He had barely enough money to pay for his passage, but he had made up his mind to get on and become rich in order to help his family. He succeeded beyond his expectations, but the first years were a bitter struggle; success was won by self denial and hard work.

The eldest son, John, got a place in the Excise in Westport. That was the time his mother and sisters came to live in Westport. The mother was worn out by the anxious years she had gone through, when the problem how to feed, clothe and educate her children seemed an almost impossible one. Once the eldest son was able to earn a living, of course, he shared with his family whatever he had. The trouble was over. It seemed then as if the mother's task was done. She let her daughter Mary take the place of head of the family. Mary was the eldest. She had a man's energy, and she took to heart the part of head of the family. She bore cheerfully all

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the burden of life. She decided all the difficulties that came in the way, and she decided quickly and well. The means at her disposal were very modest, and she managed with a wonderful art to make her mother's life as comfortable as it could be. The brother was promoted to London. From afar as well as near, his one thought was to care for his mother and sisters. He used to save on his own comfort to give luxuries to his dear ones.

The brother in America, as soon as he was able to manage it, came every year to see his mother and took great pride in helping too, and as time went on his part became more and more generous.

Strange to say, the two brothers and the two sisters lived on, absorbed in their filial and fraternal love, and neither brothers nor sisters married. Miss Mary was thoroughly happy. I don't think the idea ever crossed her mind to give up her duties as head of her family. Her heart was fully satisfied by her affection for her mother, her brothers, and above all for Martha. She worshipped

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Martha, who was young and pretty. Martha had a romance in her life.

When I knew the two sisters their mother was dead; their beloved brother John, who had retired as early as he could from the service on a pension, to live with those he loved, and who had settled down with intense pleasure to a farmer's life, had died also. His death—like his life—was most unselfish. He died saving a man's life by stopping a runaway horse. The strain was too great, he dropped down dead. He was carried back to the two sisters he left with a smile and a joke an hour earlier.

These cruel blows had thrown a gloom on the two sisters. They tried to shake it off, not to sadden overmuch their adopted daughter, who had lived all her days with them and loved them with truly filial devotion. In spite of all their efforts to be cheerful, grief made them appear in those days older than they were; they were two old maids.

It was only as time went on, that I understood that Miss Mary was by far the youngest

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of us all, young by her heart, by the interest she took in all around, by her intense love for the poor. She knew every poor family of the neighbourhood, and not only each man and woman, but their fathers and mothers, their sons and daughters.

When I asked any information about a poor creature, it was the biography of the whole family that Miss Mary sketched for me with wonderful vividness. She took a passionate interest in the lives of the poor. She was a confidant of their joys and of their sorrows. When she walked from Cherry Cottage to Westport, she remained away all day. So many times on the road, she was stopped by some poor man or woman, who wished to talk to her, to tell her a bit of news, to ask her advice; she stopped, she listened, she got so absorbed in the business of her poor friend, that she forgot the hour, forgot it was time for dinner, and that Miss Martha did not like to be kept waiting.

When Miss Mary came back and saw how late it was, she used to apologise and to

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promise never to do it again. On her next expedition it was the same story.

Miss Martha loved her garden, she spent hours looking after her plants; her health was delicate, she made one think of a flower that would have required more sunshine to bloom out fully. She was kind and gentle, but more reserved than her sister. The poor women who had kept Miss Mary talking on the road, greeted Miss Martha respectfully, but would not have dreamt of stopping her.

However, when Miss Martha was left alone at home, if any poor creature came to the door and told a sorrowful tale, Miss Martha did not stop to consider if it was true or not, she gave generously, and more than once when Miss Mary came back, Miss Martha had to own the purse was empty. When she explained to whom she had given the money, the expression on Miss Mary's face was a study. A struggle was going on in her mind. Miss Martha was too dreamy to notice it, but it was plain to any one else. An impostor had abused Miss Martha's kindness: the story

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told her was not true. But to explain the fact to Miss Martha would grieve her; Miss Mary decided in her own mind it was better to keep from her sister the knowledge that would have pained her. Miss Martha little guessed the significant glances exchanged between her sister and their old servant, when she had been the dupe of some professional beggar.

The truth was that Miss Martha could not bear to send any poor person away empty handed. When she was at dinner and a poor woman came begging, she took herself a slice of meat to the door and remained by the side of the poor woman whilst she was eating. Miss Mary let her do as she pleased. Miss Martha ate like a bird. If she were thwarted, she might eat nothing at all.

Once only we saw Miss Martha angry, very angry with a poor woman; that was an event and we spoke of it for many a year.

As a rule, Miss Martha did not trouble after the housekeeping. Miss Mary looked after everything. She was herself a competent cook and had the art of training young country girls

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who came to her knowing nothing of housekeeping, and she made very good servants of them—too often, alas! to see them going to America once they were trained. Miss Mary looked after the dairy, and the cows and calves; after her brother's death, she carried on the management of the farm as well as any man could have done.

Miss Martha only went to the kitchen on rare occasions, when she undertook to make a cake which none succeeded in doing as well as herself. One morning she was busy with her cake; she had put on a white apron; she heard a ring at the door. She thought it must be the postman, as Pepper, the dog, who hated the postman, gave a significant growl. It was the day for American letters. Miss Martha ran to the door in her apron and her hands white with flour. It was not the postman, but an old beggar woman, who had never come to Cherry Cottage. She took Miss Martha for the cook, and drawing a bottle from under her shawl, she asked her if she would buy it.

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At first Miss Martha did not understand what the old woman meant; there are some poor creatures who go about bringing holy water, or water from the Holy Well, and getting a few pence or a meal in exchange. But it was whiskey the old woman was holding. When Miss Martha realised what a temptation the old hag was putting in the way of any servant fond of drink, she became angry—very angry—the old woman took fright and ran away.

Miss Mary set about inquiring who the old woman was. She was a stranger. The reception she met with at Cherry Cottage did not tempt her to remain in Westport. She was never seen again. I must say that was the only time such an unpleasant thing happened in our neighbourhood.

Miss Martha was fond of reading; she had a taste for poetry; she took a great interest in what was going on in the country. As soon as the paper came, Miss Martha sat down to enjoy a good read.

Miss Mary used to tell me her sister was like her brother John. He too was a great

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patriot. "How he would have loved to know your husband," Miss Mary would add with a sigh. "He loved him without knowing him. Each time your husband's speeches appeared John took the paper and read aloud in the kitchen of an evening every word of the speech for the men who worked on the farm."

Dan was one of those who worked for Mr. John in those days and who used to listen to what he read. He would recall those evenings to me with an affectionate regret, and the recollection of those readings had something to do, I fancy, in making Dan a keen politician.

As to Miss Mary, she confessed that she never understood politics. She accepted Miss Martha's opinions, but did not try to know why. The only paper she cared about was the local paper, which brought her every week the news of the neighbourhood. That paper she read most carefully and was so full of it that none of her family would ever think of reading it. They preferred to hear Miss Mary telling the local chronicle, and the news were

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all the more attractive by the way Miss Mary related them.

Miss Martha had a romance in her life. She had loved and she had been loved. I never knew for certain what had prevented the marriage. But as far as I could guess, her family thought *he* was not good enough for Miss Martha. Miss Martha accepted the decision. She hid her tears. She was very pious. The will of her mother and of Miss Mary seemed to her God's will.

But she had suffered, and a shade of melancholy spread over her life from the day when she gave up being happy in her own way. From that day she became older than her years. She never alluded to her grief, but one day she and I were alone (Miss Mary was away on one of her expeditions) and we were speaking about our favourite flowers, and I was telling her of some flowers I had known in France, and did not see in Ireland. Among others, I named the wisteria.

Miss Martha gave a start. Her pale cheeks took a rosy hue. She told me eagerly she

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had seen a wisteria once in her life, and she described the lovely climber with bunches of mauve flowers. She related to me that she knew in a little town of Mayo, an old house, of which the wall was covered with wisteria. Her description was so animated, one felt that as she was speaking she saw again the wall covered with mauve flowers. She saw too, her youth and her dreams of long ago. That house covered with wisteria was the house where she had once dreamt she would live with him she loved. The recollection of the pale mauve flower had given her back a reflection of youth. She appeared to me as transfigured. How could I have been so blind as not to notice that Miss Martha was a beautiful woman? She must have been exquisitely lovely in those early days, when, for the first time, she saw the wisteria with its bunches of pale flowers.

But you must not think that Miss Martha was discontented or unhappy. She might have been happier, she might also have been more unhappy.

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As it was, her life was a very peaceful one. She was quite reconciled with it. She was very pious, as I have said. She spent long hours in the convent. Half the nuns were relations of the two sisters. Several had spent their youth with their cousins in Cherry Cottage, and had been driven from that cheerful home to their peaceful convent home. When Miss Mary and Miss Martha called at the convent, we did not expect to see them for the day. One spring Miss Mary confided to me her joy. Miss Martha's health was improving, never yet had she spent such a good winter. The frequent illnesses of Miss Martha were the one cloud that darkened Miss Mary's life in those days. It was that very year death came to claim Miss Martha. She met with a trifling accident as it seemed at first. She had got on a chair to reach down something from a cupboard. She slipped and fell. She felt the shock and went to bed, but never dreamt it was anything of of consequence. The harm done in the fall was a death sentence—Miss Martha faded

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away within a fortnight. I saw her three days before she died. I came to say good-bye, never dreaming that the end was so near.

Miss Martha did not realise it herself. Around her, they were beginning to be anxious, but they never imagined how serious the danger was. She was smiling, and looked very much younger. She reminded me of the day when she spoke about the wisteria. Her lovely black hair hung in waves on her shoulders, her cheeks were rosy, her eyes were feverishly bright. Miss Mary was constantly leaving the room to have a cry, and rushing back in a hurry for fear her sister would want her. Three days later, Miss Martha breathed her last.

Radiant at the thought of seeing her mother and brother, it seemed at the end as if Miss Martha had no heed of those mourning around her; her eyes were turned to the crucifix, the priest held before her. It was a bitter pain to Miss Mary in her overwhelming grief that Miss Martha did not seem sorry to die, that she had not one regretful look toward the

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sister whom she had loved so tenderly and to whom she had been all the sunshine of life.

Those who knew the two sisters looked on the death of the younger as the death warrant of the elder, and such was the case. Miss Mary could not live without Miss Martha. But Miss Mary had a splendid constitution, and grief had a hard task in breaking it down.

For a year, Miss Mary mourned wildly, she did not eat, she did not sleep, she would not be comforted, she wept unceasingly. She was made to travel to take her mind off, but no change of scene could make her forget her sorrow—on the whole, she was better at home.

One day, she felt so weak, so weak; her strength was gone. It seemed as if she had not strength enough left to cry or mourn any more. And then for the first time the thought struck her that if she were dead, her adopted daughter would be alone in the world. For the first time, since Miss Martha died, she wished to live. She began to take care of herself; she wanted to get well. She tried to

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eat, the longing for life became all absorbing. It was a desperate struggle between the fatal disease and the will of the patient. She was nursed by the most devoted of daughters, with an admirable self-forgetfulness. For months the struggle between life and death went on, sometimes we began to hope, Miss Mary was so happy each time she felt better. She sat down with such keen delight in her armchair near the dining-room window; and she took her old interest in all that went on around, what she saw from her window had so much meaning for her. When she noticed some of her poor friends passing by, she used to send word to them to come to her, the chats around Miss Mary's armchair were as long and as confidential as the talks on the road long ago. How she enjoyed being the first to hear a bit of news! One day I remember one of the men who used to work for her on the farm, came to tell Miss Mary that his son was going to be married. She told me afterwards so proudly that Tim Kelly wished to tell her the news before he mentioned it to anyone else. She

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approved Tim's choice. It was one of the matches arranged by the elders, the young people scare knew one another. "But they will be happy," said Miss Mary confidently. There was one thing only she was nervous about, Tim was a widower, he had one son and one daughter, the daughter was a baby when her mother died, and Tim had been mother and nurse to the little creature, and as she grew up he had spoilt her to his heart's content. Miss Mary loved to tell me of Tim's devotion to his little girl. When Nelly grew up, Miss Mary took an interest in her; she used to send for Nelly and give her good advice. How would Nelly get on with the young woman, who would now be the mistress of the home, where Nelly had been the all powerful goddess, for so many years? Miss Mary had an interview with the young girl and with the young wife. She settled a plan of division of labour that would help to keep the peace. The arrangement worked most successfully for a good while. The father was so pleased to see his Nelly getting on with her sister-in-law;

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he would come and tell Miss Mary with great glee that Nelly was learning to knit and sew. The girl brought up by her father had very little taste so far for any feminine occupation. If any friction took place, Miss Mary heard of it and made peace.

When Miss Mary was gone, Nelly became dull at home. She wished to go to America and she went. Some months later I met Tim and asked him what news he had of his daughter, the poor man looked as if he did not know whether to laugh or to cry. "She writes that she has found a place in a very kind family and that she has never been so happy in her life."

He was pleased to know his daughter was happy, but at the same time the thought that she felt *so happy* away from him, without him, was very painful to his father's heart. And there was no Miss Mary now to whom he could go and tell what he was feeling!

It was by Miss Mary's bedside that I learned to know the doctor—our doctor. He was so devoted, so sensible, so patient. Each

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time he called Miss Mary felt better and after he left she used to tell me. "It does one good to see Dr. Allman, he is so kind and cheerful, and he was so good to mother long ago!"

The brother from America came several times during his sister's illness. Bernard's visits were a great joy, and the mere recollection used to cheer up Miss Mary. He was persuaded that his sister must get well, that it only required an effort of will, and the poor woman was quite ready to believe him. She wanted to live, she clung to life in a pathetic way, and she was most obedient to her brother's least wishes.

Certain commands of the brother's disturbed poor Miss Mary's habits. For instance, he liked his sister to settle down in the drawing-room, and of course she settled down in that room. It was a stiff room, used only when strangers called. One did not see the road. Miss Mary missed her arm-chair near the window. But she explained to me that Bernard was right, that it was silly not to use the sitting-room.

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As soon as Bernard went away we returned to the dining-room and felt very much more at home.

He had bought a brougham for his sister. It was an unheard of luxury in our neighbourhood. Miss Mary was very proud of her carriage. All her life she had driven on outside cars, and at times she felt a little ashamed of so much luxury, but it was Bernard's wish!

Each time she felt able to go for a drive in the carriage, Bernard was so pleased. He praised his sister, and repeated to her that she had only to have a strong will and all would go well.

As long as he was there, she fought with her weakness, and seemed better. On the day he was leaving, it was touching to see how he strove not to seem anxious; he made plans for his return in a few months; Miss Mary too struggled to appear cheerful; to prevent any tears. He always had some invention of of his own to amuse her at parting. At his last trip, he told her he left her an American

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purse, and that she must take care of the paper in which the purse was wrapped.

The purse remained on Miss Mary's bed.

It was some hours afterwards that Miss Mary opened it. She repeated to me smilingly her brother's warning to be careful of the paper. "You see what practical people those Americans are, they don't throw away paper as we might do at home."

She screamed. The paper he alluded to were bank notes, there were bank notes in each of the divisions of the purse; so many notes that Miss Mary got frightened when she added up what the sum was. She began to cry. Then she raised herself on her bed. "How Bernard would scold me for crying." She dried up her tears like an obedient child, as if he could see her. And then she added sadly: "He would scold me for feeling so weak. I don't know what is the matter with me to-day? I feel as if all my strength had left me."

The effort she made to seem better when her brother was at home brought on a collapse after he left. But we were accustomed to that.

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We quite expected her to be worse after he was gone. Some bad days had to be lived through. Then she used to be a trifle better and all around her clung to hope again. The first day she was better, she would settle down and write a long and chatty letter to Bernard. When she felt very ill, poor soul, she would insist on dictating a cheerful and deceptive account of how much stronger she was getting.

Things went on in this way for many months; we grew used to Miss Mary's illness. A chat by her bed or by her armchair had become one of the pleasures of our lives. We all took the keenest interest in the little local news, for her sake, to have some bit of gossip to amuse Miss Mary. To the end she kept her kindly interest in those around.

But the cruel disease was stronger than all loving care—was stronger than her anxious wish to live. One sad spring morning Miss Mary had one of her attacks, her strength was gone, she did not rally.

The blow struck her brother's heart. He had preached so often how force of mind can

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conquer illness, he had no strength to fight disease in his turn. Scarce a year after his sister's death, he died away in America.

As I pass near the graveyard where Miss Mary and Miss Martha sleep by the side of the brother and mother they loved so fondly, the picture of those sweet ladies rises before my mind. I wonder if one will find later on, old ladies, like those we have known, so full of the spirit of youth in their old age, so full of sympathy with the young. It seems to me that in our days, life becomes so complicated and difficult, that people grow older in mind more quickly, and I am afraid as time goes on, that the Miss Marys and the Miss Marthas will grow rarer.

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CHAPTER XIII

A MURRISK IDYLL

NOW-A-DAYS, when so many people are given up to doubts and fears concerning everything, and seem to have lost the very power of believing in themselves or their country; when so many imagine that life in Ireland is very dreary, and that hope and joy await them the moment they step on the ship that takes them to America, it does one good to see two people thoroughly happy and full of confidence in the future; two young people who have loved one another through many a long month of dreary waiting, and who, having conquered all opposition, all now being smooth, are happy with a heartiness and a fulness of joy which one was half afraid were lost gifts in this *blasé* century of ours.

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Under Croagh Patrick

If you wish to see happy faces, take a peep into the Church of Westport this very morning. The bride stands there, tall and slim, in a dark, fitting serge dress with dainty white blouse, a look of dreamy happiness in the eyes made brighter by the tears shed only a fortnight ago. The bridegroom is a well-built, sturdy young sailor with a sunburnt, honest face and a beaming expression of joy over all his countenance. Both are young, and on this sunny autumn morning life spreads out before them full of hope and work and content, and the confidence that all will go well in the years to come. The friends and relations, in their best Sunday clothes, make a pleasant group, and prominent are the two fathers—good types of fishermen, with strongly-marked features, that have stood many a gale of wind and many a hard day's work. The bride's mother is beaming, and so might be described the several brothers and sisters present; in fact all, young and old, share the general satisfaction. As to the bridegroom's mother, though rejoicing with her son, ("She is in Heaven," as her neigh-

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bours say, over the event), she is missing from the festive group; yet you may be sure that her heart is not far from the Church at this very moment, although she had to remain behind to cook and to have all ready for Austin and his bride, and all the friends and neighbours who are expected back from the Church to rejoice and to dance at this happy wedding. And a good dinner she had ready for the guests! When the feasting was over, the dancing began and all neighbours were made welcome. A most enjoyable day it was, and, as a neighbour described it:—"Not one unpleasant word, but such rejoicing, and merry-making, and such good feeling, and such dancing! Why, some of the dancers were scarce able to get up the next day."

A fortnight ago there was little thought of dancing or rejoicing in Burke's house. His wife and daughter were going about their work with red eyes and sad faces; the fisherman himself was as gloomy as his womenkind, and answered so gruffly any remark from his little daughter, that she soon recognised

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that any attempt at conversation was useless. All three remained plunged in their sorrowful reflections.

And yet no material loss was weighing on Burke and his family. His cabin is among the most comfortable in the fishing village; he has the best fishing-boat in Murrisk, and he is by far the best fisherman of the little community.

This prosperity is all the more enjoyable that Burke has lived through very hard times. When we knew him first, (at the time he took us to Clare Island, many a year ago), his boat was a very crazy old boat, which had once been submerged when his father was drowned, and which was very unsafe to trust on Clew Bay. In those days Burke's clothes were threadbare and patched, and his face had that pinched, drawn look one so often sees among our poor people in the West, and which tells of hunger and want, a look that becomes painfully familiar in a Western crowd in a bad year—a look that struck a great Australian statesman, who was going round with my

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husband some years ago. After having examined the eager faces of the Murrisk men, who were discussing the chances, so remote in those days, of getting more land, he remarked there was not *one* fat man in all the crowd.

But Burke's days of privation came to an end a good many years ago. A Local Fund had been started in Murrisk soon after we settled down at Mallow Cottage, in connection with the Congested Districts Board, to enable the fishermen to get better and larger boats, and to get nets and other means of fishing. The fisherman who had been allotted a better boat had to pay back the price of it, in instalments, to the Board. Burke had been among the first to get one of these fine boats. He well deserved the confidence shown him. Through good and bad years, he worked hard to pay off the instalments due to the Board, and his ambition was to pay off the price of the boat, so as to become the owner of the "Sophia," and have her as his very own and his son's after him.

This only son was very dear to him.

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Austin had been a little sailor ever since he could walk. He went everywhere with his father, and learned to make himself useful on board at an age when other boys still cling to their mothers' skirts. Austin* was a silent boy, but he had a very expressive face. I never read despair depicted on human features as I saw it on the lad's the day his father's sail was rent, as we were leaving Clare Island.

His face, however, could express other feelings as well as sorrow. I remember, some years later, my husband had written a fairy tale about Murrisk, in which he described young Austin and his father. The story appeared in a Christmas Number, and Austin's sister—our Mary—took the paper home. One day we were sailing on the bay in Burke's boat, and some one mentioned the story. Austin said not a word, but he smiled and blushed, and the look in his eyes told us more eloquently than words that he had read

* The Augustinian monks had a monastery in Murrisk, of which the picturesque old ruins can still be seen. As a reminiscence of old times, nearly every second boy in the neighbourhood is called 'Austin.'

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the story, and realised that he himself was the little, bare-footed sailor lad therein described. Years went by, and when Austin was a grown man, we were on board again, and chatting about "A Queen of Men." One of the fishermen said that a lady had given the book to the fishermen's little library in Cleggan. The light in Austin's eyes made one realise that he had read and appreciated the book, though he could not have said so in so many words.

For all his shyness and diffidence in speaking, Austin was a very good fisherman and a brave sailor, and his father took great pride in him.

But one day Burke came to me with a sad, careworn face. Austin was ill, he had been ailing for a long time, and now he was in great pain and could not walk. The father was afraid of hip disease, and, as the dread thought crossed his lips, he added, what would he care about the boat being his own, or about anything going well with him, if Austin was not to enjoy what he had been working for.

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As usual, the hospital in Jervis Street gave a shelter to the poor lad, and he spent long weeks there in bed, for the doctors were unable to say, for a long time, if they could cure him or not. He bore the imprisonment with as much philosophy as could be expected from one who was accustomed to a free, outdoor life, and his taste for reading helped him to pass the time. In one of my visits to Dublin, I had a pleasant glimpse of the sailor absorbed in an exciting tale, and forgetting his own troubles while following an entrancing adventure. He was feeling better then, but he did not know when he would be allowed to get up.

Some time after, we were at home, and, coming into the kitchen, I saw—Austin!

He had been discharged. He came back by the night train and walked to Murrisk at three in the morning. After some rest, he had walked out from Murrisk to tell me he was well again, and to thank me.

Such a walk, for a beginning, was a good sign that our patient was fairly strong. In

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fact, it took my breath away, and made me fear that it might bring on a relapse. But, thank God, my fear was groundless. Austin was cured; he went back to his boat with renewed joy, since he was now free from the terror that he might be unable to work, and so become a burden to his family.

One December day, Burke was at the fair in Westport, and some men from Clare Island came and asked him to take a cargo from Westport to Clare Island. An Achill man had undertaken to carry it, but the weather was so bad the Achill man had taken fright and brought back the cargo to Westport quay. Burke was not inclined for the job. It was blowing a stiff gale, and it might be days before he could go to Clare Island. But the men from Clare Island were pressing, and they told him what a state of distress the the islanders were in for want of provisions; their repeated appeals—and perhaps also the desire not to be afraid of what had frightened an Achill man—made Burke consent in the end. He took his boat to the quay to get the

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load, and there he had to lose a good part of a day, for the men who had to bring the goods had gone to a funeral. By the time the cargo was on board, it was too late to think of starting for Clare Island, and Burke took the boat to Murrisk. For several nights he slept on board, not liking to leave such a valuable cargo unwatched, and his son slept on land. The storm was blowing still, and there was no use in thinking of making a start.

However, one night Austin noticed a change in the wind, he went to the boat, woke his father and suggested that they had better start. He was right; the wind was favourable. Before daylight they were at Clare Island, and they had to wait till the first islander was up. They could not get near enough to the shore to unload the cargo, and the islanders had to come out in their row boats and do the work of unloading. Once the news spread on the island that provisions were at hand, the boats were soon out, and in a short time the cargo was on shore.

Burke was anxious to get back to Murrisk

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as soon as possible. Two of the Clare islanders remained on board to help Burke and his son, and the boat had just started on its return journey and was getting away from the island, when a squall burst and the boat struck on a rock. A deep hole was made, and the water began to pour in. In one moment the harm was done. There was no way to save the boat; the only question for the four men on board was how to save themselves. Burke and his son could swim and their chance was to plunge in at once and make for the shore.

But the men from Clare Island could not swim, and when Austin suggested to his father that it was high time to leave the boat, Burke shook his head, and said he would not be so mean as to save his own life and leave the men, who had come on board to help him, to drown.

However, just then help was approaching. From Clare Island the distress of the "Sophia," had been noticed, and a row boat was struggling to the rescue. The storm was fierce,

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the waves dashing madly around. The rowers made an attempt to reach the hooker, but they were carried back, and, frightened by the fury of the gale, they turned away from the wreck, making for land.

The sight roused Austin. He sprang into the waves and swam towards the receding rowers. Having reached the boat, the silent lad found burning words to shame the men who were turning their back on the wrecked seamen and leaving them to perish. He persuaded the rowers to try once more to save the lives of the crew of the "Sophia." The attempt was a dangerous one, and might well have caused the Clare Islanders to hesitate. The row-boat had to go near the wrecked hooker, and to watch its opportunity, as the waves were rising higher and higher. As it came nearer to the bigger boat, the danger of being dashed against its side and destroyed was extremely serious.

However, the men followed Austin's lead and, coming near the " Sophia," they threw out a cord ; Burke seized it and tied it around one

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of his companions; a moment of deadly anxiety, and the man was safe in the row-boat!

The rowers had now to watch their opportunity; encouraged by their first success, they went to work with a will. Choosing the minute they could get nearest to the hooker, they threw the cord again, and the second man was safe. Burke now felt free to leave the sinking ship, and he swam in after the two Clare Islanders were in safety, owing their lives to the pluck of young Austin and to his father's dogged feeling of duty.

The row-boat reached Clare Island safely, but not a plank was left of the hooker. Burke and his son mourned over the loss of the "Sophia" with a grief that only seamen know.

The news of the wreck spread far and wide. We were in Alexandria, on our way from Australia, and had not seen an Irish paper for months, when the mail brought us some papers that had followed us all around the world, and there and then we learned the misfortune that had overtaken poor Burke.

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The next news we heard was that a subscription had been started for him. No people can be more generous than the Mayo people in alleviating any local misfortune, and a handsome sum was collected in Westport.

A Dublin friend, who had spent some pleasant days in Burke's hooker, drew public attention to the thrilling story of the wreck, and added by his kindly efforts, to the local subscription. By a piece of good luck, at that very time a landlord of the neighbourhood was building a yacht for himself, according to his own plan, and he wished to sell his old one, which Burke succeeded in securing for a trifling sum. The new "Sophia" was far superior to her predecessor.

All around the Bay, at every race, Burke wins the first prize by the swiftness of his boat, and he is known all along the coast as the most successful and hardest working of the fishermen.

Why, then, was Burke looking so gloomy, and why was his wife crying, and why was Bridget, the little daughter, putting up her

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handkerchief to her red eyes, when no one was looking at her?

Mary, the other daughter, is happily married in Killinakof, and as cheerful an Irish wife and mother as you could meet; there was no trouble about her.

Was it about Austin they were all fretting? Was he ill again?

No; he stood on the road, the picture of ruddy health—but with a gloomy look on his young face that reminded one strangely of his father's expression at that very moment.

Yes, there was trouble in Burke's household, and it was the old, old story. Austin was in love, and his father would not give his consent. The trouble had been going on for many a month.

Last spring I heard there was grief in Burke's home. His wife was breaking her heart. Austin was going to America. A cousin of his had sent him his passage ticket. Austin was away fishing with his father, when the letter had come from America with its fatal

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enclosure, and poor Mrs. Burke could do nothing but cry day and night.

What did it mean? Why should Austin want to go to America?

Then it was explained to me that he was in love with a young girl, the daughter of another Murrisk fisherman, and Burke was opposed to the marriage.

All who spoke to me praised the girl and bewailed the father's opposition. Burke's wife and daughters were all eager that the young man should marry the girl of his choice, and settle down at home, instead of going away to America. I was told that Austin was as obstinate as the old man, and that if he was thwarted in marrying the girl, he would surely go away.

We had a chat with Burke. He agreed to all that we had heard, he had no objection to the girl herself, but he argued that she was not strong, and that a woman in the village had said that the girl would not live a year. (The girl is no more likely to die soon than any of us!)

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"If Austin will marry her sister," added Burke, "I will give my consent. Could I say anything fairer?"

He was quite surprised when this 'fair' proposal made us laugh.

We pointed out what a sad thing it would be for him to lose his son, who had been such a good son, and how his mother would grieve over it.

I added—"If the mother is anxious for the marriage, you should remember that she will have to live with the young woman for weeks at a time, when you men are away fishing, and if she is willing to do that, you, who will have so much less to do with her, should not refuse to make them all happy."

"I have no fear that the girl is not a good girl; I have not a word to say against her," but all the same the old fisherman was obstinate and our appeal failed.

I really could not get Burke to explain the reason of his opposition. It may have been that he was taken aback to see his son manage his wooing in his own way—as a rule

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in our villages, mothers and fathers meet and settle all about a wedding; the young people —too often, alas! not so young as one would wish! agree to what has been planned by their elders. These marriages turn out very happily, but all the same one's sympathy goes out to to the young folks who fall in love and stand by their choice.

We went away to London for many a dreary, anxious month during the Session, and I heard no news of the lovers.

When we came home, a Murrisk friend of mine told me that public opinion was roused against Burke on account of his harshness to his son.

The young man did not go to America, neither did he stay at home. He went to Leenane to work for some weeks. Last Sunday I was told, he came home and brought his little tin trunk to his father's house.

When the father came in and saw the trunk, he said he would not have a disobedient son in the house, and ordered him to carry out the

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trunk. Burke's daughter and wife cried and cried, when young Austin took up his trunk and went to a neighbour's house.

This explains to you why Burke and his family were looking so dismal this October afternoon.

The next day Austin came to see me. He looked very manly now, a true sailor, with a sunburnt face and honest eyes that reminded me of his sister Mary.

He told me he would never give up the girl he loved; they were engaged and he would stick to her, even if he should be beggared for it. He had been earning good wages in Leenane and had saved most of it. As his father would not have him at home, he would return to Leenane and work on for another while.

He stood there, the picture of a rustic young lover, finding words to express his feelings in a way the Austin of old would never have dreamt of doing.

He told me he would go to Westport and see one of the priests and tell him of his

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trouble. Perhaps the priest might have some talk with his father, or give him advice. He promised to come back and tell me the result of this effort.

Austin was only gone a few minutes, when I was told Burke had arrived with a young man. I went to meet him with any but amiable feelings. I resented his obstinacy that was causing so much grief. But when I saw him, my anger melted away. If he had made his wife and son suffer, he had suffered himself; perhaps, if the truth were known, his suffering was more acute than theirs; he looked as if he had not slept for many a night, and he had certainly lost flesh.

He had brought a lad to me who was ill, and anxious to go to Dublin. Could I get him an order for a hospital?

"Well, first of all, we must know what is the matter with him, and we must ask our doctor if he advises sending him to Dublin. I have to speak to you," and I took Burke upstairs and, with very little hope of success, I began to show him what a pity it was estrang-

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ing his son, and causing his wife such grief.

"I know," he said, "her heart is broken over it."

And then, to my intense surprise, before I had time to put forward all the good reasons I had prepared to convince him, he told me that, to please me and the master, he would give his consent, and, he added: "once I give my word, I mean it."

We shook hands and congratulated one another, and although the master was deep in work that day, I brought Burke to give the good news himself. The poor man looked as if a load were taken off his shoulders. Then he told me the lad he brought me was a brother of Austin's girl, and, a very good boy.

Here I may add that the doctor found he was not in any danger, and advised him to remain at home and take cod liver oil. You should have seen the joyful look on the lad's face, when he came back to tell me this prescription. He thought he was suffering from

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consumption, and, when assured it was not so, he felt better at once.

Burke went home, and, some hours later, Austin returned. He had not found any of the priests at home, and he was looking miserable. You should have seen how his face beamed when I told him the good news.

"I will never cross my father in anything!" he cried out, fervently.

I heard that later on, father and son were seen together, looking very happy.

The tin trunk has returned to the familiar corner. Burke's wife, in her joy, told a neighbour that she felt she could do twice as much work until the end of her days, and those who know her, know she is able to get through more than a fair share as a rule; and, she added that she almost felt as if she could jump with joy.

The young people's delight can be better imagined than described. There is no more talk of going to America, no, nor even to Leenane.

A fortnight later the young lovers had an

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ideal autumn day for their marriage feast. No more joyful pair has ever been seen in Murrisk, since the long ago days when the little fishing village nestled down around the monastery of the Augustinian monks.

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CHAPTER XIV

A COUNTRY WITHOUT MURDERERS OR THIEVES

A NEIGHBOUR of ours was telling me one day that when her brother lived with her, he would often go into the garden on a summer's night when everyone in the house had gone to bed, and when he came in, he would settle down to read or smoke and forget to close the hall door. In the morning it used to be discovered that the door of the house had been open all night. "Luckily the country is safe," added the old lady. "Because, in spite of all my scoldings and all my brother's promises to close the door every night, he would forget next evening both promise and scolding and leave the door wide open."

To live in a country where one can leave

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one's house open all night without fear of robbers or murderers is fairly pleasant, but to live in a country where one never even thinks that murderers or thieves are possible, is to enjoy a sense of security that will seem grossly exaggerated. But this is not so. I speak not only from my personal experience, which is naturally limited, but it is the language of official statistics, not tinged with partiality.

In the country, crimes are almost unknown —in the towns, they are very rare. Open a newspaper of London, Paris or New York, and in it you will find in the *faits divers* of one day more crimes reported than are judicially chronicled from one end of Ireland to the other in a whole year.

Thefts are so rare that it seems natural to be surrounded by honest people; and the poorer people are, the more certain one can be that they would not dream of touching what does not belong to them.

Our doctor told me lately one story, which I could multiply many times. He knew a man belonging to the neighbourhood who had

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gone to Australia and made money there. This man came back bringing with him a considerable sum, several hundred pounds, with which he was thinking of buying a house and shop in Newport. Carrying his money in a bag tied to his neck, he went to Newport, found what suited him and when he was going to conclude the bargain, he put his hand up for his bag. His bag was gone! It had slipped from its hiding-place, and no trace was left of the bag or the money. The man in despair began to run here and there, telling everyone he met of his misfortune. He had dropped the money on the road from Westport to Newport. Before he had time to return to Westport, he was met on all sides by people bringing him back his money. He did not lose one pound out of all that large sum.

How many touching or comical stories our friend the doctor could tell you. He, who has known our peasants for more than thirty years, who loves them and is beloved by them! He has told me that very often a sick woman, who has only a few months to live, will ask

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him if she is likely to get well. "Because, says she, "my people make me take eggs and beef-tea. They killed a fowl for me the other day. If I am to get well and be fit for work again it is all right, but if there is no hope, it would be a pity to allow my poor children to go to such unnecessary expense, and I must put an end to it."

Of course, the Doctor answers in a way to make the poor woman feel it is no waste to take care of herself. But if she really knew that these delicacies are only intended to soothe her last days, she would, as she says, forbid this unnecessary expense.

As a rule, poor people don't allow themselves the luxury of eating their own eggs, except in case of illness. There is more profit in selling them and in eating cheaper food.

Our friend has comical experiences too. He was telling me that poor people have curious notions in time of sickness and that you could never guess the queer ideas they get into their heads. He was attending a poor woman who was ill of a dangerous fever. Her sister,

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a young girl, was living with her and looking after her. The doctor sent some medicine for the sick woman. At his next visit, he asked the healthy sister if the patient took the medicine, and the young girl answered impetuously: "Luckily my sister did not take that horrible mixture! I took some, to see what effect it would have on me, it nearly killed me, if my sister had taken it, she would have died." The girl really believed she had saved her sister's life. She did not dream that what could sicken a healthy woman might cure a sick person.

Our doctor, after his experience of more than a quarter of a century, agrees with me it would be impossible to find in any part of the world more honest people than our poor neighbours.

Workmen leave their tools in the fields when they go to their meals; they find them on their return. The idea never strikes any of them that such things could be stolen.

Young Irish girls are famous for their irreproachable conduct. American hotel keepers

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are well aware of this and they look out for Irish girls, whose good conduct and honesty can be relied on. So many people speak of Irish improvidence. The girls who go to earn a living in America, or who remain on as servants in Ireland, from the first day they enter a place, have only one thought: to send home the greater part of what they earn. They keep very little for themselves, sometimes too little, forgetting the exigencies of a harsher climate than their own. More than one poor girl has lost her health through the desire not to send home an empty letter (that is how they call a letter not containing a postal order). They do not buy the strong boots or the warm clothes required for the bitter American winters, in order that they may send more money home. When they break down in health, they come back to die in Ireland, with the hope that the native air will cure them. The longing to get home is so strong! I will quote part of a letter written on a sick bed in a far off country, just to show what so many poor girls feel:—

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"I take the liberty of letting you know how I am situated. I am sorry to say I have been laid up in this hospital for the last five months and never once got up. I got influenza, got cold after it, which affected my lungs and now I am as bad as I can be. I have a dreadful cough and get up a good deal of blood and have got very thin. I am like a skeleton. I often think how happy I was in Westport and how strong. Now it seems as if I were quite alone."

How often when one asks what broke down the health of a girl, very strong a few years before, it turns out that in America her strength gave way, the work was excessive and the conditions of life anti-hygienic. The poor girl, after months of sufferings, fills a place in the village grave-yard, which would have remained empty for many a year if she had stayed at home in the healthy country life.

But the girls who are preparing to go don't think of those who come home to die; on the contrary, they are won over by the girls who

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come home well-dressed and proud, to see their parents, or who send home their photographs from America.

Irish girls are gifted with a wonderful power of adaptation, and those American photographs have often amazed me. I remember one girl who spent a year in our house. Bridget helped in the kitchen, milked the cow, but never had waited at table. One day a domestic catastrophe deprived us suddenly of our cook, just as we had visitors in the house. Bridget cooked a perfect dinner and brought it to the dining-room, her skirt tucked up as she had it when she went to milk the cow, her hair flying loose, and a look of terror in her grey eyes.

She had an aunt in America who sent for her. A year after she left us I was shown two photographs which Bridget sent a young friend of hers. One photograph was taken in evening dress, shoulders and arms bare, the hair put up according to the latest fashion:—Bridget was going to a ball! The young girl who was showing me the photograph was somewhat confused by the bare shoulders—we

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are very old-fashioned in our ideas at home! and she told me she preferred the other photograph. She was right. Bridget had a very pretty walking-costume in the second photograph, and the grey eyes had a confident look very unlike the terror they expressed the first time she entered our dining-room. Photographs such as these contribute to show America in a tempting light. They help to attract the girls who have not the more praiseworthy and imperative duty of going to America to help their parents.

An old woman who used to come and sell matches and thread to us had been ill when Bridget left us. The first time old Basket Mary (as she was called) came to us when the girl had left, she asked me where was Bridget. I answered she had gone to America. "The goose," exclaimed the old woman. "She had her America with you."

But Bridget got on very well. She was an orphan and she had not to stint herself to send money home. Before she left Ireland her grandmother died. It was the grandmother

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who had brought up Bridget and Bridget's only brother. The old woman left her small farm to her grandson, and left £10 to her grand-daughter. The young man had just got married. He sent word to his sister that he would find it hard to pay such a large sum as the grandmother's legacy all at once, but that he would pay by degrees out of his earnings. Bridget wrote to him to keep the money, as she did not require it. I only learned this by chance. Bridget did not tell me. It was the nun who had sent me Bridget, and who was looking after the girl's interest, who saw the letter and told me of the refusal.

It is sad when one talks with a young girl of the future to hear that same expression: "when I am grown up, I will go to America."

The sick, the weak in body or mind, remain behind. One wonders anxiously what will become of Ireland in another half century if this kind of thing goes on.

People often speak of improvident marriages as one of the causes of Irish misery. They say that people marry too young. In the

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country my experience is all the other way. Very often, the man waits very long before he thinks of marriage; he gets married too often when he is no longer young, and has not the consolation of seeing his children grow up. Marriages between young people are the exception. As a rule in the country the parents arrange the marriage, discuss the conditions, settle everything. The girl and her future husband scarce know one another, and sometimes they only meet once or twice before the wedding takes place.

One of my friends had a perfect cook, whom she trained. The girl arrived quite ignorant from her cabin, not knowing even how to walk —she walked on her heels! In a very short time she learned her business, and it was a pleasure to see her in her kitchen so neatly dressed, so active, so gay. My friend had had ten Dublin cooks in one year, and her one dread was to lose Kate. But Kate did not think of going to America, neither did she think of getting married. She laughed at her comrades who fell in love and neglected their work.

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She was very economical, and mended her cotton dresses with a skill worthy of a Frenchwoman. She looked so pretty in her clean, mended dresses, that her mistress quoted her as a model to the other girls around.

One day Kate came to her mistress and told her a little bashfully that she would leave her next week.

"What do you mean, Kate?"

"My match is made, ma'am. My mother has settled it all. I am sorry to leave you, but I must go."

My friend began to speak to Kate of the important step she was going to take. "Did she know her future husband long enough to be sure that she would be happy with him?"

"I saw him yesterday for the first time," said Kate. "My mother tells me he is very quiet."

The following week Kate got married. She used to laugh before at the women who fell in love and now she amused her friends on market days, when she came to sell her eggs and her butter, by her impatience to return to

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her husband. "I am in a hurry to see himself," she would say. "I cannot keep him waiting," and she would refuse even to drink a cup of tea before starting home on foot—and she had a long way to go.

Kate has been married now a good many years, and if she is obliged to leave home for a few days, you should see the letters she writes to her husband, as well as her joy over his and her feverish anxiety when she is returning not to miss the train. "He will come to meet me at Castlerea," she explains to me, "we will go home together in our cart," and she blushes and beams at the thought that she will see him soon. As to him, I do believe it is only to be of service to me that he allows his wife to leave him. She has sometimes come to me to replace a cook in a domestic crisis, and having Kate for a few weeks made me realise that a countrywoman, who had learned her work, is a treasure for us country people far beyond more pretentious town servants.

Kate's experience is the experience of nearly every country woman. Those marriages

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arranged by the parents are very happy in the great majority of cases. There are exceptions to all rules. It happens sometimes that husband and wife quarrel and make each other's life unpleasant. If the demon Drink intervenes, life becomes a burden, but in most cases the wife shows an extreme patience; she forgives and suffers without complaining, and her resignation at times seems superhuman. She loves her husband in spite of his faults. The idea that a married woman could do aught but love her husband is almost impossible for an Irish wife to conceive.

A young friend was telling me that her aunt had as servant a charming girl, pretty and bright. It was a pleasure to look at her, or to hear her singing over her work, and her laugh gave one the wish to laugh. Many young men would have liked to pay her attention, but Maria did not encourage them. The postman in those days was a bachelor, and a very attractive young man. He took twice as long to give letters and papers when Maria came to the door, but Maria was not thinking of

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courting. She told her mistress she had no wish to get married ; she had plenty of time to think of it.

One day her mother came to fetch her and told her that they had found a husband for her. He was a worthy peasant, who was a little better off than most of his neighbours, but who was middle-aged, and did not seem the husband to attract handsome Marie with her small fortune saved out of her earnings.

However, Maria got married. Afterwards, she used to come and sell eggs and butter to her former mistresses. My young friend was surprised to see Maria look so smiling, for she had pitied her so much to have been obliged to marry in that way.

Maria did not imagine that the young mistress thought her lot a hard one. One day when she came, the young lady was alone and was tempted to ask her if she was happy.

"Oh, yes, miss," said the young woman, "my husband is so quiet." That is the greatest praise a young bride gives her husband.

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"And you love him?" asked the young girl, surprised.

"Miss," said Marie, blushing, "how could one help loving one's husband?" The question seemed almost a guilty one to the simple-minded soul. That one could help loving one's husband seems impossible to these women, who are quite incapable of conceiving the idea that a married woman might not only not love her husband, but might love another man. Such a terrible state of affairs is outside the power of conception of an Irish brain, and I think it would be impossible in our country places to find one example of a married woman causing scandal by her ill-conduct. It would be utterly useless to try to discover one *drame passionel* at the foot of Croagh Patrick.

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CHAPTER XV

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

THE bond which unites parents and children in Ireland is very tender; it is the passionate love of a French mother for her son—only the Irish woman has usually half a dozen young creatures—sometimes more—to love and look after, whilst the French woman usually has one or two. The Irish father loves his children with as tender an affection as a French father. When a family is very poor and the problem how to feed all these mouths frightens me, the father comes to tell me with pride that this time his wife has twins. He beams.

A woman, whom we knew, stopped us on the road to complain of her son. The bad boy had got married without consulting her. She had such a hard struggle to bring him up and to bring up his brothers and sisters, and she ex-

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pected that when he was grown up he would work for her and help her. He fell in love and got married; and the old woman went on abusing her son and daughter-in-law.

Luckily the daughter-in-law had a small cottage of her own, and the young people were living by themselves. My husband tried to appease the old woman and failed,—even when we were far from her her voice resounded in our ear. A year later we were on the same road, and the old woman came to tell us that she was the grandmother of two lovely boys. She had forgiven her son and his wife in the joy of welcoming the twins.

The grief of parents is bitter when death snatches away one of their little creatures. A poor man from Murrisk used to work for us. I looked on him as half silly. He was sure to fail in everything he undertook, and even managed to get upset in a boat (lent by a neighbour) on a calm sea, barely escaping drowning. His stupidity was known all over the village, and yet one of the prettiest and most attractive girls of the neighbourhood

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became his wife. I don't know how they managed to live, they were so poor. They had only one small field. He went to England to work, but he came back before everyone else, and brought back very little money. I remember that on his last trip he scarce earned as much as would pay the expense of the journey home. I scolded him for coming home back too quickly, but I did not know then how undeserved the reproaches were. The poor creature suffered—as I learned afterwards—from a cruel illness, and the hard work and exposure in the English fields rendered the attacks more frequent and more acute.

His young family consisted first of twins, followed by many other children. Father, mother, grandmother (the old woman lived with the young couple) greeted the arrival of the twins as a great happiness.

Some years later, one day when the poor man was looking very miserable, I asked him if he was ill. On his giving up going to England, we promised him one week's work in the month, that was the height of his am-

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bition. He told me if he was sure of one week in the month he could manage to live. In fact, on the strength of those twelve shillings every month, and his dinner for *one* week, his health improved and he began to look less starved. That day, however, he was so pale, I was afraid he was ill again. Before answering my question he leant on his spade, put his hand to his eyes and told me one of the twins was dead. He described in most touching words his grief; the boy was so lovable. "Each time I came home from my work the little lad ran to meet me, and now I will never see him again running to meet me." And he burst out crying.

From that day I was ashamed of ever having looked on him as a fool, and I was ashamed too, to think that if I had learned, without seeing the grief of the father, of the death of one of the twins, I would never have guessed how sad the poor parents would be.

If parents love their children, the children are very loving in their turn. When they grow up they prove their gratitude for all the

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care shown during their early years, for all the tenderness they have found in the paternal nest. The girls are wonderfully devoted and self-sacrificing. The sons are good sons; whether they go abroad or remain at home, they help the old people as long as they are unmarried. But once they have a home of their own they do very little for their parents. One cannot blame them for that, as usually their means are not great; but a daughter never ceases to think of her parents. If she goes to America it is with the intention of helping her people, and as long as her health allows, the parents can count on her. Even if she marries she does not forget them; very often for their sake she gives up marriage, gives up every selfish joy to devote herself to them in their old age. If among the children there is a delicate sister, a cripple brother, the poor creature who cannot work becomes, after the parents, the most important being of the family. The others work and save to make life pleasanter for the afflicted one.

I have seen so many acts of devotion and

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forgetfulness of self that I could not think of quoting them; and I learned many touching details of such cases, but not from those who, in acting unselfishly, never once imagined they were deserving praise, but only doing their duty. When one lives in the country one gets to know intimately the circumstances of one's poor neighbours, and one meets with deeds of sublime charity, which gives one a better opinion of human nature.

Side by side with these self-forgetting men and women, one meets selfish and hard-hearted beings. There are grabbers, people who covet their neighbour's fields, who would not steal money, but who would commit as base a deed by stealing what belongs to the widow and the orphan. There are the usurers, gombeen-men, who crush the poor and make them pay far beyond what they owe. As a rule the richer people are, the more they are a prey to cupidity and avarice. I am convinced that it is among my poor neighbours I would meet with the larger share of charity and love of the poor.

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I would naturally find among my poor neighbours bad tempered people. I have no intention of saying that my Mayo friends are free from faults, any more than any other human beings. There are, in the villages, family quarrels; there are dissensions among members of a village community; and those local disputes sometimes take heroic proportions. Every Irishman who thinks he is right is ready to go any length to prove it. The more peaceful a man is as a rule, the more obstinate he is if he has suffered a wrong; he is willing to lose everything rather than give way. Lawyers find their profit in this tendency and they encourage it. Many a time, men, who were going to law for some trifling cause with their neighbours, have come to my husband and looked on him almost as an enemy, because he gave them advice to settle rather than run the risks of a law-suit. Once, however, the quarrel reaches a certain point, it is useless to try and make peace. The best thing is to ignore as much as possible local quarrels and not take side with either party.

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The subject of the dispute appears to us very petty, but if we had to live like those poor people, huddled together within a very small space, if our fields were all mixed up, we would end also, perhaps, in feeling very bitter towards a neighbour whose cow trod on our meadow, or we would grow indignant because she attacked our hens when they picked among her oats.

I must own that one of the hardest things in life is to teach hens that there are spots where they are not welcome. I know that our hens have plenty of fields at their disposal, yet they insist on coming among the flower-beds in front of the house, exciting the just wrath of our gardener. If we cannot manage to teach our hens to avoid hurting our tulips and our geraniums, when they have fields to roam about in, it must be much more difficult to keep them in order when the space is limited and the temptations all the greater on all sides.

I believe if saints were placed in the same circumstances as surround so many of the poor

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Irish tenants, they would lose patience, and, if their mothers and sisters came with all their feminine grievances to add fuel to the fire, they themselves might end by going to law with their neighbours.

Drink is another great source of trouble. I have seen too many homes rendered hideous by that evil; homes where the man or woman or both drank—to forget the curse of it all. But here again the country is more favoured than the towns. As a rule, country men are not addicted to drink. They do not drink at home, and they are far from the temptations of the public-houses in their every-day life. It is only when they go to town on market-days that they are exposed to temptation. Some fall victims, and these poor people suffer all the more because they often get bad whiskey and take it on an empty stomach.

I must say that in our walks at the foot of Croagh Patrick we have often met our neighbours from the mountain or the sea-coast coming back from Westport on a fair day or a market day, and the number of those under

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the influence of drink whom we met on those critical occasions was very small.

In Westport, or at Westport quay, every second house is a "public," and there are unluckily in that neighbourhood drunken men and women who are hopeless cases. Yet even in the town drunkards are in a very small minority. I know in Westport worthy workmen who resist all surrounding temptation, and bring up their children in a way to excite admiration. I know poor women, whose poverty made them leave their country home and take refuge in the town with their children to look for something to do, and who manage to get along by sheer economy and hard work, in surroundings far more trying than those of country life.

It is among the small number of hopeless drunkards, that the class of professional beggars finds its least deserving recruits,—an unattractive class with whom all sensible people should be at war.

But when one thinks how poor the country is, the number of professional beggars is not

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great. They have their tricks like their brethren of more civilised countries, their small deceits, their lies. The young girl, who asks for help to join her husband in Scotland, has never been married and has no intention of leaving Westport;—the man who came a month ago with a pitiful story of the death of his wife and got some money, returns with the news that he has buried his daughter; wife and daughter are imaginary beings as the man is unmarried;—a woman who had received a new dress at Christmas goes and pawns it to get drink; all such tricks show how careful one must be to keep professional beggars at a distance.

The honest poor in the country and town—I speak from experience—do not appeal to our pity by lies. Their misery seems so natural to them, that when one goes among them, their condition is found to be more pitiful than they had led one to expect. Lower depths of misery than they had told one of are met with.

Luckily for Westport and its neighbourhood

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the tourists have not come in too great numbers, they have a way of attracting beggars to such an extent that the stranger who follows the ordinary tourist route, looks on Ireland as the land of beggars, never dreaming that they themselves are the cause of the evil, nor that the rest of the country escapes quite free. True it is that the children beg behind the long cars which ply between Killarney and Glengariff, but our children go to school and have not even discovered the long car that goes every summer day between Leenane and Westport. The car takes the travellers through a lovely country, along the sea and among the mountains, and if the tourists who go to Leenane or come back to Westport had spoiled our children, I would be very much concerned, since it was from Mallow Cottage came the description of "Undiscovered Connaught," which opened to the tourists the beauties of a country, unknown before for want of a road. The old road between Westport and Leenane passed for many a mile through a monotonous country. But the new road skirts the sea as far

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as Louisburgh, and then it turns in and brings the traveller through a glorious country of lakes and mountains—a never-ending delight to the eye.

The tourist must notice with pleasure that from Rosbeg to Louisburgh, all along the coast, the peasant houses look clean and bright. The windows are curtained, and sometimes flowers grow around the cottages on which whitewash has not been sparingly used. Here and there the thatched roof is neatly repaired, and large stones are carefully held by ropes to keep the roof safe when the storm blows across the bay. Every one tries to make his house attractive in order to draw the bathers.

Each summer, from July to October, the bathers arrive. Most of them are poor people; peasants living at a distance from the sea; workmen shut up in a town all the year. When the distance is not great they come on their carts and bring their beds and provisions. They then settle down in a cottage for a small sum,—cooking their food them-

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selves. They remain two, three weeks—sometimes a month, and are easily known, sitting on walls along the road, doing nothing. The women wear all the clothes they possess, even on a warm day they have two or three heavy shawls around them, and two or three skirts. The cure consists in dipping in the sea and drinking sea-water; the more sea-water they drink, the more they believe their health will benefit. I have sometimes been alarmed at the number of glasses of sea-water a bather had taken in one day.

Our peasants visibly rejoice when the bathers come, though in their hearts, they look on them with a certain amount of good-natured contempt, and think them somewhat crazy. Those who live all the year near the sea, cannot understand that people should come from a distance to stay by the shore. However, they keep their feelings to themselves, and take pains to please the bathers, in the hope that they will come back the following year.

There is another cause that excites in the

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hearts of the women the wish to keep their houses neat; it is what are called 'stations.' Each spring and each winter, before Easter and before Christmas, a touching custom brings the priests of the parish in turn to every house, however poor it may be, to say Mass. The neighbours come to Mass, and everyone goes to confession and Holy Communion. People who are too old, or too ill to walk to the town, look forward to the chance of going to Mass in a neighbour's house.

The woman whose turn has come knows a few weeks beforehand that a 'Station' will be held in her house. She prepares her cottage with intense pride for that solemn occasion. How she washes the floor, how she rubs the furniture, with what a busy and important air she prepares all that is required! I have said that our peasants don't understand that flowers have a monetary value, but for a 'Station' they are very pleased to have bunches of them put on the improvised altar.

Formerly, neighbours remained after Mass,

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and spent the day, eating and drinking. The expense was great and there were other disadvantages. The ecclesiastical authorities put an end to the abuse. Now-a-days after Mass, everyone goes away. The priest alone remains to breakfast, and often that is an opportunity for a priest, who knows his people, to manage to settle family disputes.

Every one is disposed on that day to make the first step, which costs so much in ordinary life, and a better understanding often owes its origin to a word spoken at the right time on the day of a 'Station.'

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